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ADDRESSES

DELIVERED AT THE EARLY CELEBRATION OF

HOLY COMMUNION

THROUGHOUT A "MISSION" HELD AT

HUDDERSFIELD, LIVERPOOL, SUNDERLAND, NORTHAMPTON, TIVERTON,

EDINBURGH, LONDON, CROYDON, BOSTON, BOURNEMOUTH,

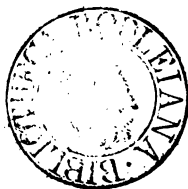
AND OTHER PLACES.

BY

FRANCIS PIGOU, M.A.

VICAR OF HALIFAX, CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HER MAJESTY.

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TO
ALL WHO HAVE AT ANY TIME,
AND ESPECIALLY
TO MANY DEAR "CHILDREN"
WHO HEARD THEM DURING THE QUIET, HALLOWED
MORNING HOURS OF A "MISSION,"

THESE

Addresses

ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

THERE is perhaps scarcely any occasion for a Preface to the following Addresses. They speak for themselves. In publishing them I am only deferring to a wish frequently expressed by those who heard them delivered, and who desire, in this less ephemeral form, to have at hand, for leisurely perusal, words which at the time they found, under God, helpful and encouraging.

This little volume is in no sense a Manual of Devotion, nor is its object that so fully attained by the many valuable works recommended for the use of communicants. It is not in my thought to multiply these. These Addresses are published for the sake of the many, dear to heart, and cherished in memory, associated with the hallowed, indelible recollections of a "Mission," such as it has often been my privilege and happiness to conduct. To such may the perusal of these Addresses recall those happy hours !

I have long thought that there is a want of detailed explanation of the conditions of worthy communion ; and as I hold it to be an essential and integral feature of a Church of England "Mission" that there should be a daily celebration, the Address or Meditation then given

affords a fitting opportunity for this detailed explanation. I have throughout sought to elevate Holy Communion to its true and proper position, as the highest of all ordinances, as the most full of blessing to all true believers in Jesus Christ; avoiding, I hope, on the one hand an exaggeration, and on the other hand too low an estimate of this holy ordinance. May this humble contribution to this great theme be owned of God; and, imperfect as are all our utterances, may these be blessed of Him by His Holy Spirit to those who shall read them, and be helpful in encouraging them to a more perfect participation in that holy ordinance, where Jesus makes Himself known in the breaking of bread!

FRANCIS PIGOU.

THE VICARAGE,
HALIFAX, *March 1877.*

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*Christ was the Word, and spake it,
He took the bread and brake it,
And what the Word doth make it,
That I believe and take it.**

* Attributed to Queen Elizabeth, when examined as to her belief in the Real Presence.

ADDRESSES

ON

HOLY COMMUNION.

I.

36
7

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread : And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat : this is my body, which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”—1 Cor. xi. 23-30.

No words can be more explicit or solemn than these in which the Apostle sets forth the true end and object of the institution of Holy Communion, the safeguard in self-examination against an unworthy partaking of it, and the evils which follow on an unprepared approach

to the Lord's Table. They will form the keynote to the Lectures or Addresses which I have delivered from time to time at the early celebration, throughout the conduct of a "Mission," and which I venture to put forth in their present form in compliance with a wish repeatedly expressed to that effect by those to whom they were, under God, found helpful.

Nothing in connection with our Christian religion, worship, and profession, is matter of more general observation and regret than the fact, on all hands confessed, that so few comparatively of worshippers in Christian Churches, on any given occasion, are *communicants*.

They have been baptized, and in bringing their children to the Font they recognise "the great necessity of this Sacrament where it may be had." Whatever differences of opinion exist on the subject of Infant Baptism between certain sections of the Christian Church; wide as the gulf may be between those who hold and those who reject the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, Baptism *itself* is recognised and observed as a plain act of obedience to Divine command. The neglect of it is rightly considered as involving exclusion from the privileges of the Christian covenant, and even from the pale of Christianity itself. As a rule, it is through neglect, and not disinclination, that any are found or remain unbaptized.

Not now to speak of other rites of the Christian Church, of which Christians readily avail themselves, here is this incontrovertible fact before us, attested and confirmed by general ministerial experience, that a very

large proportion of worshippers, whose presence in church may be taken as proof that they believe Christianity to be true, and, week by week, are reminded of an ordinance which has no meaning apart from Christianity, rarely, if ever, communicate. They cannot recall the occasion when they partook of the Lord's Supper. Now, this is a grave fact—is it not—if Holy Communion have any meaning or value, and if it be of Divine institution? *Either it is a means of grace or it is not.* There is no middle ground. For of it may be predicated what is true or false of any other means of grace. Why do we pray? Why do we praise? Why do we worship? Either, I repeat, Holy Communion is a means of grace or it is not. Either they who partake of it have good reason for doing so or they have none. Either they look for some spiritual benefit or for none. And if Holy Communion have any value, that value is surely no more intentionally confined to a privileged few than is Baptism or Prayer. Why should some habitually partake of that holy ordinance, and others as habitually say, "I pray thee have *me* excused"? Why should some remain and prolong their worship and receive that Sacrament, and others, without compunction or even misgivings, neglect it? Does not this thought ever cross the mind of a non-communicant, "Why, if others remain, do not *I* remain"? Is there no suspicion even that some great privilege is foregone! Amongst the sad thoughts that a minister of Christ, it he watch for souls, cannot but know, is this, that there are who habitually attend his ministry, who are seen in

their accustomed place from Sunday to Sunday, whom he has never seen at the Lord's Table, to whom he cannot remember ever having administered the "broken bread."

Again, how many have received Holy Communion *once*? When was that? Shortly after their Confirmation. Where are these, say six or twelve months afterwards? If it was thought good to receive it then, what has made it less good since? Were any encouraged to believe that the object of Confirmation was to admit to Holy Communion, but that, once admitted to share that privilege, there would be no need to enjoy and use it again? Others, regarding communicating as a *duty*, limit avowedly their acts of communion to the three great festivals, Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide. Such communicate rather by prescription and rule than from any vivid and intelligent appreciation of the *design* of the ordinance. Are there none in every congregation who, it is to be feared, habitually communicate with little or no preparation of heart; with a surface self-examination, or with a refined superstition which looks to that ordinance as having the nature of a charm or spell? Prostrations, genuflexions, frequent crossings, do not these often betray a conception of the Lord's Supper bordering upon, as it savours of Romish error; an exaltation of the ordinance, which is as likely to make many "weak and sickly" as the opposite danger of never communicating, or communicating unworthily?

How many, again, as the end of life draws near, and they hear the deep summons of the sea, and on a sick-

bed leisurely review life, and in prospect of its close are brought face to face with themselves, finding the need of religion and its consoling offices, express a desire to receive Holy Communion! When all that is false and unreal is falling off the man; when he distinguishes with quickened sense, if not with alarm, between what was hollow and real in his religion, assumed from various motives, but on a death-bed utterly powerless and peaceless; when he would in some way atone for the neglects of the past, in the hope of quieting an accusing conscience, or getting relief under inward uneasiness and the torments of self-reproach, or of wiping off the transgressions and ungodliness of a wasted life, he takes refuge in the hope that all this may be brought about by partaking of the Holy Communion! He feels that something has been left undone, some high privilege foregone. He hears again the invitation, frequent and earnest, to the Lord's Table. No longer able to worship in the Sanctuary, there rises before the mind's eye the vision of the fair white linen cloth, the sacred vessels, the ordinance prepared from which he lightly and wilfully turned away. And when the question is asked of him by some friend, solicitous for his soul's peace, or by the clergyman who knows the end is at hand, "Would you like to receive Holy Communion?" rare is the instance in which one, sick unto death, does not say, "Yes."

I seem to myself, whilst writing these lines, to be ministering in a sick-room where no time is to be lost, for powers are fast failing, where flesh and heart faileth.

The dying man, surrounded by all nearest and dearest, is about to pass away from all which makes life dear; it may have been too dear! Soon he will close his eyes on this world for the great awakening in Eternity! Under no circumstances is Holy Communion more solemn, more impressive, than when administered for the last time in the chamber of death. But what if it be then administered for the *first* time? Neglected, despised, unheeded in the days of church-going, is there no danger of its being regarded as a *viaticum*, or as only another form of "extreme unction"? Just as men often scout the idea of "conversion," and any miraculous or extraordinary manifestation of grace, and yet, with marvellous inconsistency, look for it on a death-bed, so that view of "extreme unction," which he would have repudiated had he heard it preached, may after all be the view the dying man is taking of Holy Communion. He then receives it for the first and the last time. How often, out of deference to the wishes of relatives, rather than from any Spirit-taught conviction of its blessing, the sick and dying yield to earnest solicitation that they would not die without partaking of Holy Communion, or in some vague sense they hope to derive comfort from it at the last, when they have never sought and found comfort from it throughout a life during which, by a faithful partaking of it, they would, as life drew to its close, have not guessed at, but experienced its refreshment and blessing.

Now, if all this be true—and to deny it must be to forget and falsify ministerial experience—if it be true

that men and women do turn to, do look to, do desire Holy Communion at the last, there must be something radically defective and utterly mistaken in the views currently entertained about the ordinance itself, that it can be so neglected throughout life, and yet desired at its close. There must be some misconception, very prevalent and widespread, as to what constitutes "*worthiness*" and "*unworthiness*." Or if, as I shall throughout these Addresses endeavour to show, no preparation for death and for Christ's second coming can be more meet than habitual Holy Communion, there must undeniably be something hidden away in the man's life; something he loves more than his Master's presence; something incompatible with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; some sin indulged, worldliness of mind, bitterness of spirit, want of charity, or secret unbelief, which sufficiently accounts for his not communicating. All this, doubtless, does protect that holy ordinance from the profanation of a Judas' kiss, or a Judas' hand "on the table;" but it makes this solemn exhortation none the less necessary: "Consider with yourselves how great injury ye do unto God, and how sore punishment hangeth over your heads, when ye wilfully abstain from the Lord's Table, and separate from your brethren who come to feed on the banquet of that most heavenly food." Alas! how many make a convenience of God! They hold, as they are fond of saying, their "*views*" and their "*opinions*." They try to persuade themselves that they can turn to Him whenever they please; that they may put their own interpretation on His express command, and

observe His will according to *their* idea of what that will is! What should we say and think of the man who had his "views" about the law of gravitation, and, setting God's law at defiance, leapt from some precipice, doubting he would be injured by his fall? What should we say of the man who believed he might thrust his hand into the fire, and yet not be burned? What should we say of the man who "had his opinions" about the laws of electricity, and ridiculed the conditions in recognition of which lightning, or a charge from a Leyden jar, would play around him unharmed? He would discover to his cost—would he not?—that, whatever his "*views*" and "*opinions*," they do not touch or affect God's *laws*. Yet, is it not thus that men, shall I say *dare*, to speak with respect to the conditions on which God gives blessedness hereafter, and to their present use of those means of grace which He has seen fit to ordain for the promotion of that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord"? If *these* are not used or believed in, may we not ask, "To what *other* is a man trusting?" What right has he practically to charge God with folly? What authority has he for entertaining and indulging the thought that, whatever may be necessary for *others* is not needful for *him*; and that, after all, there are *many* ways of salvation, and not but *one* and only way?

To my mind the atheist or infidel is much more consistent than the "honorary member" of a creed which he professes, but uses and observes only so far as suits his convenience. In the one case the man believes in

nothing but himself, in the other he believes in God according to his own "views." Meanwhile the *law of God* is as clear as any one of His laws in the natural world; the conditions on which spiritual blessing is vouchsafed or withheld are as defined as the conditions on which injury or safety from harm may be experienced; the commandments of God are as explicit as facts in the realm of physics. And while this canon may be fairly applied to all means of grace, for who has a right to say he can dispense with Repentance or Faith, with prayer and the study of God's Holy Word, it surely may be applied with tenfold force to the neglect of Holy Communion. Is it really so that a man is no loser by not partaking of it? Does it then come to this, that I am at liberty to elect one or other means of grace, and practically dispense with the rest? Is every man to be a law to himself, and to determine for himself as to what is and is not necessary to the sustenance of his spiritual life? Granted that Christianity is true, there is a significance attached to Holy Communion which makes habitual neglect of it nothing less than a practical denial of Christianity itself. It is, we must remember, one of the historic monuments of Christianity. This is urged by Leslie in his well-known "Short and easy method with the Deists," and in all familiar works on the evidences of Christianity. *It has no meaning apart from Christ.* Holy Communion is a standing and perpetual memorial of the death of Christ, as the Passover was a standing and perpetual memorial of the deliverance from Egypt.

If Christianity be *not* true, on what supposition are we to account for the unbroken, uninterrupted commemoration of this particular rite? Empires have risen and fallen; rites and customs, once religiously observed, have faded from remembrance and fallen into desuetude; but here and in thousands of Churches this particular rite is observed as it will be until all shadows cease and Christ Himself shall come. It has come down to us through the lengthening corridors of time, and notwithstanding all the controversies of which it has been the centre, in its severe and unimpaired simplicity. Whatever view men may take of it, bread and wine are still the simple symbols. It speaks to us of the *death* of Christ, of nothing else, of nothing less. If it speak not of that, as of a fact co-temporaneous with the reign of Herod and the governorship of Pontius Pilate, whose name is historically blended with our Creed, as if to challenge verification, then all history is false, and the Sacrament is an "idle tale" and sheer superstition. All must stand or fall together. But we know that the death of Christ is *not* an "idle tale." We have the testimony of history, of ancient documents, of heathen writers, of those whose interest it would have been to deny the truth of Christianity. And we also know that the institution of the Lord's Supper took place under circumstances the most solemn and touching. It was on the very eve of the Lord's crucifixion.

We might think that that death could never be wiped out of the world's memory, could never be obliterated and effaced; that it would be graven on our hearts as on

the rock for ever. But the Saviour knew our nature far too well. Do not we in course of time forget benefits and blessings conferred? Frivolous pleasures, fretting cares, absorbing pursuits, do not these crowd on the mind, fill our hearts, and lay claim to devotion? How many of us amidst the facts, monuments, pledges, proofs of Christianity, are habitually mindful of the Saviour? The world would soon have forgotten Him, His ministry of blessing, His death on Calvary, but for some enduring memorial, and that in a form which should be of perpetual repetition, and should appeal to the senses. Therefore by touch, taste, sight, an appeal is made to the senses, reminding us perpetually that Christianity is not of mere feeling, not an "idle tale," but a real historical actuality. Look on that Table prepared! What does it set forth? It sets forth Jesus Christ evidently crucified among us.

It was on the eve of His death that our Lord and Saviour instituted the Blessed Sacrament. He was about to die! Is there not something exquisitely tender, intensely human, in the narrative? Does it not appeal to affections and sympathies which we all have and cherish? "With desire," so He said; "'with ardent longing' I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." It was the *last* time on which He and the faithful few would meet again. It was their last meal together. Some of us know what leave-takings are and have been. Farewells and death-beds—are not these some of the saddest of our experiences? There is always something sad in doing anything for the last

time. Going over the home of your childhood for the last time; the child leaving home for the great wide-world life; the widow going over the home of her married life, in which she has known years of happiness, for the last time; the emigrant's last look on the white cliffs of his native shore: these experiences, are they not sad and tearful?

"I never say the word Farewell,
But with an utterance faint and broken—
A heart-sick yearning for the time
When it should never more be spoken."

But how solemn those leave-takings, when nearest and dearest are fading away, and to-morrow they will no more be with us! Is it not so that the tenderest words are reserved for the tenderest moments, and that in the prospect of separation lips are unlocked to speak and hearts opened to hear words, and last messages, and dying requests, which cannot but be treasured in the memory? Who of us has not been summoned to a parent's bedside, and received their loving counsel and latest blessing? Who has not known the power and grace of the few words, spoken feebly and earnestly, by dying husband, dying wife, dying sister, dying brother, dying friend; when, for the moment, forgetful of their own suffering, gathering up all remaining strength in one supreme effort, all that lay nearest to heart, and was uppermost in thought toward those they must soon leave, is uttered in a few weighty words? Is not all this not unfrequently accompanied with some gift, which, however trifling in itself, is of value unspeakable,

because of the circumstances under which it has been given? Do we not treasure the jewel worn by one who may wear it no more; the book with the familiar handwriting, the lock of hair, the portrait, the letter; the most trifling token which serves to remind us of those who are gone before, when we sometimes say to ourselves—

“ Oh! for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still ”?

And if some earnest request be made of us, some wish expressed by those who, loving us, have loved us to the end, do we not feel that we do their dear and tender memory a wrong if, as the anniversary of their death come round, or the occasion of carrying out their wishes present itself, we forget all that in their last moments they so desired of us?

And He so loved us, lost, perishing sinners! What but *love* could have moved Him to die for us? What but love the deepest, the tenderest, could have constrained Him to undergo all the bitter humiliation, and to have poured out His soul unto death, that we might be saved from death eternal? Ah! brethren, the sense of that love is—I speak from glad experience—simply overpowering when realised for the first time, not as a sentiment, but as you realise, though in infinitely fainter degree, love of husband, wife, child, friend; when the Holy Ghost gives you, as He alone can give you, to see how utterly lost is our state out of Christ, how hopeless all our efforts to merit salvation, and how nothing short of His atonement could

bring about reconciliation with a holy and offended God. This love, which, for all I know, the reader of these pages has never experienced, and which would of itself explain not communicating, must be *experienced* and not *imagined*. And until you do know it, and are *constrained* by it, your religious life is all outside the mark. All that can be said of you is that you are making a God of your religion. You have not yet found, and finding, *loved* your Saviour. Everything centres in Christ. All our hopes and possibilities of salvation centre in Jesus; not in formal church-going, religious observances scrupulously repeated, and that sentimental view of the Cross which finds facile expression in crosses worn as an ornament, but as you have learned the *guilt* of sin, which needed an Atonement, and have learned the lesson beyond that of that wondrous *love* which *first* loved you and constrained the Saviour to die that death, of which Holy Communion is a standing witness and a perpetual memorial.

For such, who, though they may have been baptized, are frequent worshippers, and have seen many days, and have never realised their own exceeding sinfulness and felt that love of which Holy Communion perpetually reminds us, the Sacrament *cannot* have much meaning or value. They may perchance partake of it, but what spiritual *benefit* does such partaking ensure? We come to Christ *for* life, and to Holy Communion *with* life. We come to Christ *for* forgiveness, and to Holy Communion *with* forgiveness. Food and strength are for the *living*, not for the *dead*. The sinner by grace gets life

in Christ, and from Christ, and has Christ for his life, and in Christ's ordinances His believing people derive fresh strength and grace ; but unless Holy Communion is to degenerate into sheer superstition, if it is not to be regarded as a *duty* to be performed, but as the highest *privilege* to be enjoyed, we must come to it, not to have love so much awakened as deepened, we must come in an already realisation of that love which it memorialises, not *to be* disciples, but *as* disciples. No soul will gain refreshment, strength, and enabling from that holy ordinance who interprets "do this in remembrance of me" as meaning nothing more than the carrying out last wishes, or as a mere attestation of our conviction that Christ died. *It is a means of grace.* It is not a mere outward act of profession, like some rosette or armorial bearing. We go to Holy Communion not to *give* but to *receive*.

In the course of these Addresses it will be my prayerful effort to show in what "*worthy*" and "*unworthy*" Communion consists, and in what sense only can Holy Communion be rightly designated the *Eucharist*, the highest of all acts of worship. It may be, God helping me, I may persuade some to communicate, who hitherto, from mistaken views as to what constitutes "*worthiness*," have never communicated. It may be I may dissuade others who, from mistaken views as to what constitutes "*unworthiness*," frequently communicate ; and of whom in both cases may this be truly said, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you ;" but I would lay this down as a starting point, we do not come to Holy Communion to be *made* Christ's disciples, but we

come aright when we come *as* His disciples. We do not come to Holy Communion looking for some sign, expecting some miracle of grace, but we come to commemorate a sacrifice, the virtue of which we have *already* by faith, in some degree, however faint and imperfect, experienced; and seeking to be, by Communion with Christ, spiritually fed and strengthened, as our bodies are by bread and wine. And as they are assuredly not safe for eternity who, never having realised the guilt of sin, have not, as a matter of course, realised their need of a Saviour—for the one, in the order of grace, follows as effect on cause—so the first step towards any intelligent and profitable carrying out of this dying injunction is for us to pray that God the Holy Ghost, Whose work it is to “convince of sin,” and to take of the things of Christ and show them to us, may both convince and teach our unbelieving hearts and blinded sense. “*What I see not, that teach Thou me*” is a short but pithy petition. It is a prayer I have known to have been blessed to many earnest souls seeking to know “the truth as it is in Jesus.” Each one of us has a soul to be saved. That soul can be saved but in one way. *By grace ye are saved.* For each one of us Jesus died. For each one, standing apart from the rest, as grains of sand on the sea-shore, as individual leaves of an overshadowing tree, He died! This we may accept and believe theoretically; but oh! how different this apprehension of the truth and of the end of His death when we can say, “Yes, He died for *me*. He is *My* Lord and *My* God!”

And what does He ask of us for whom He died?

Some great thing? All He asks is that we would remember Him! The poorest and lowliest could not have asked less. "Remember who I am; remember what thou art; remember Me as thy Saviour; remember My love; remember Me as hating thy sin; remember Me as bearing thy sin." All He asks is that we would remember Him!

What, if amidst all our memories, fragrant and tender, all treasured recollections, all vanished forms, all silenced voices, all latest and dying wishes; amidst all that nothing can obliterate or efface, *Jesus* is not to be found? What if there be no room in the inn of our hearts for Him? What if there be no habitual, abiding, constraining recollection of Him to Whom we owe all our hopes of salvation, and the homage of devoted heart and dedicated life!

God, in His infinite mercy, have mercy on those who know not, who love not the Lord! God of His compassion forgive us when by sin and wilfulness or infirmity we have forgotten our Saviour's love! God, by His good Spirit, so deepen in our hearts the sense of sinfulness, and the sense of wondrous redeeming love, that Christ alone may reign supreme within us; and that as often as we see the Holy Table prepared, and recall the dying command, "This do in remembrance of Me," our reply may be—

"According to Thy gracious word,
In meek humility,
This will I do, my dying Lord!
I will remember Thee.

" Thy body, broken for my sake,
My bread from heaven shall be ;
The cup of blessing I will take,
And thus remember Thee.

" When to the cross I turn mine eyes,
And rest on Calvary ;
O Lamb of God, my sacrifice !
I must remember Thee.

" Remember Thee, and all Thy pains,
And all Thy love to me ;
Yes, while a breath, a pulse remains,
Will I remember Thee.

" And when these failing lips grow dumb,
And thought and memory flee ;
When Thou shalt in Thy kingdom come,
Then, Lord, remember me !"

Amen.

II.

REPENTANCE.

"Come unto Me, all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you" (St. Matt. xi. 28).

The first of the "COMFORTABLE WORDS."

IN my first lecture I have dwelt on the institution, end, and design of Holy Communion, showing that it is one of the historic monuments of Christianity, having no meaning apart from it, and that it was instituted as a standing and perpetual memorial of Christ's death until He come again. I drew attention to the confessed and grave fact that so few, comparatively, of worshippers are communicants. If Holy Communion be a means of grace, instituted and ordained to that end, the neglect of it is not only plain indifference to Christ's dying command, but it must be to the impoverishment of our spiritual life. There must be something utterly mistaken in our conception of what constitutes "worthy" and "un-worthy" communion; or something radically wrong in the life, if while other ordinances are used, this one in particular is neglected. In the course of these Addresses I shall, God helping me, endeavour to remove groundless objections on the part of those who never communicate; persuading, it may be, some to communicate who hitherto, from mistaken views, have hesitated to do so;

dissuading, it may be, others from communicating who never having realised the condition of worthy partaking may be partaking "unworthily." We will in pursuance of this object take the first of the so called "comfortable words," bearing in mind that the Prayer Book is *the language of believers* in the truest sense. These short addresses were not delivered indiscriminately, or without a definite object in view. They formed part of that teaching which throughout a "Mission" was consecutive, systematic, and progressive. They were, more or less, in immediate connection with the subject of the sermon on the evening preceding; and, indirectly, they served, I trust, to show that the teaching of our Prayer Book is *evangelical* teaching; that it is the *language of believers*, and to the Spirit-taught, enlightened mind is thoroughly Scriptural. I propose in this and the following papers, if God permit, to reproduce these addresses at some greater length than that in which they were extemporarily delivered; they had especial and particular relation to Holy Communion, and to the conditions of *worthy* Communion. There can be little doubt that Holy Communion is the highest of all means of grace. That is said of Holy Communion which is not said of prayer. The tone of the Service itself is loftier than that of any other part of our Service. It is rightly called the *Eucharist*, *i.e.*, the "Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving," and praise is loftier than prayer. Of Holy Communion it is said, "that we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood: then we dwell in Christ and Christ in us; we are one with Christ and

Christ with us." Again, we heartily thank God that we are thereby assured of His favour and goodness towards us, and "that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of Thy Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people." These, therefore, are the privileges of Holy Communion to those, and those only, who communicate "*worthily*." For Sacraments are not of the nature of magic or charm ; they do not work mechanically. There is a difference, as wide as the east is from the west, between the *opus operatum* of the Romanist, and the *opus operantis* of the Reformed Church of England. We do not hold that the blessing or grace connected with the Lord's Supper is wholly independent of the mind or will of the recipient. In accordance, therefore, with this view of Holy Communion, we speak of *worthy* and *unworthy* Communion. We say, "As the benefit is great if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy Sacrament ;" and, on the other hand, "So is the danger great if we receive the same unworthily." There is, therefore, a receiving that holy Sacrament *worthily* and *unworthily* ; and there is a "*benefit*" or "*danger*" in communicating. How important, therefore, if both the "*benefit*" and "*danger*" be so great in close connection with an ordinance instituted by Christ himself, that we understand what is really to be understood by *worthy* and *unworthy* Communion, that we may be partakers of the "*benefit*," and that we be not guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ our Saviour ! Many, I am more and more persuaded, are restrained from communicating through a mistaken

notion of what constitutes *worthiness*, and shall we not say that many who habitually communicate would not approach that Holy Table if they knew what *unworthiness* in the sight of God really means? It does not follow that because we communicate we receive a blessing, and many who are deterred from communicating are depriving themselves of blessing. They are, as a rule, the least worthy to come who think themselves the most so, and they the most worthy who count themselves the most unworthy. There are who come out of custom, habit, and from the cold conviction that they *ought* to communicate. Others need to be provoked and encouraged to approach the Lord's Table. Others come never doubting their own fitness, and their inconsistent life is a stumbling block in the way of those who would communicate, but who shrink from the thought of such grave inconsistency. They fear to add to their already sinfulness, the sin of such unblessed Christless communion. Some who ask with holy fear, "How dare I come, who am so sinful?" ought rather to ask, "How dare I, who am so sinful, stay away?" Some who come with no thought of their unfitness would do well to pause, and ask, "How dare I come?" What more common than the fear of *unworthy* communion? How needful, therefore, that we see we are not mistaken either way. May God the Holy Ghost be with us in our humble endeavours to arrive at a right explanation of that on which such issues hang!

Salvation is as free as the air we breathe. It is God's great *gift* to us in Jesus Christ; but He, as He has a

right to do, conditions His gift. The first condition is *Repentance*, which precedes Faith. We believe rightly so soon as we repent truly. Repentance must be a *distinct, personal, conscious* act. It springs up in the mind in view of *perceived guilt* and of *perceived personal guilt*. In connection with salvation, Repentance is that state of mind which arises from the perception that all sin is *against God*; and where such perception arises in the mind through the first, and efficacious working of the Holy Ghost, Whose office it is to "convict of sin," we perceive sin in its *true* light, we see ourselves guilty, lost, condemned. We mourn, *not for the consequences of sin, but for sin itself*, and we not only sorrow, but we *hate* it with a supernatural hatred, and hating, *forsake* it. There is and can be no "godly sorrow" for sin until we are godly. The *true* penitent has a clear view of his state before God, and in the light of the Holy Spirit's teaching, he writes the most bitter things against himself. The world flatters; the world palliates, excuses, justifies sin. He sees sin and sees himself, in some degree, as God sees him and his sin, therefore *self-condemnation* is one of the very first steps in, as it is *evidence* of, true Repentance. The need or requisite of Repentance stands in the very fore-front of our public Services. The opening sentences of Divine Service are exhortations to Repentance. The assurances of God's forgiveness are not proclaimed until we have assured Him of our sorrow for our sin. The exhortation to Repentance meets us at the very threshold of Holy Communion. The Catechism lays this down first and

foremost as required of them who come to the Lord's Supper, "To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life." In the Exhortation, we are bidden, "Judge yourselves that we be not judged of the Lord ; repent you truly for your sins past." As we come to receive it we hear these words yet again, "Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins." And then what language more abject, more abased, more lowly, more self-condemnatory than that which our Church, *assuming that they feel* and realise its meaning, puts into her children's lips ! "We acknowledge and *bewail* our manifold sins and wickedness, which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, *against Thy Divine Majesty*. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings. The remembrance of them is *grievous* unto us ; the burden of them is *intolerable*." What utterances more expressive of the profound conviction of sin, and of sin as against God ? How unreal, how *false* these utterances in their lips, who use them having *no such conviction* of their personal sinfulness ! How of the lip and not of the heart where there is no real humbling consciousness of personal guilt, and no real forsaking of the sins thus mourned over ! Is it not awful unreality to say to God of ourselves what we do not feel of ourselves, and to ask Him to *forgive* what we do not really *hate* ? It is wrong and evil to say to one another of ourselves what we do not feel, how much more so solemnly to kneel before the great Searcher of hearts, and say we feel the

burden of sins, which are no real burden, because their guilt is not really perceived ! But where this sinfulness is realised ; where the language of our Confession is the utterance of a sin-convicted soul ; where we feel ourselves guilty because the Holy Ghost has given us to see ourselves as God sees us, and to hate sin because against a holy, loving Father ; this so far from *detering* us from approaching the Lord's Table, *is the very feeling which should bring us there*. The Lord's Supper is a standing protest, whilst the world lasts, against sin ; because sin made the Atonement on the Cross necessary. It is, at the same time, the standing testimony, whilst the world lasts, of a Saviour's love. If you would understand what sin is in the sight of a holy God, you must read its character and guilt in the light of the Cross. If you would understand what the love of Jesus is for your guilty self, you must read and discern it in the light of the Cross. The first condition, therefore, of *worthy* Communion is a sense of unworthiness of such love. Your unworthiness establishes a claim on the Saviour's love. "I came to seek and to save that which was *lost*." "I came, not to call the righteous, but *sinners* to repentance." Who, when He was on earth, drew near Him if only they might touch but the hem of His garment ? Who went away from His feet forgiven, healed, and blessed ? Was it not they who most felt the plague of their sickness ? It is even so now. His Holy Spirit awakens the sense of need. If you have a sense of sinfulness, not a consciousness of *indulged* or *unrepented* sins, but a consciousness of sins for which

you continually *sorrow*; if you feel the power of indwelling sinfulness; if you have an ever-present fear of falling, through the strength of temptation, the deceitfulness of your own heart, the weakness of your will; all this should bring you to, and not keep you from the Lord's Table. If you are conscious of imperfect Repentance, imperfect sorrow, want of love, cold devotion, slowness in the spiritual life, and yet, in the integrity and sincerity of your heart, your desires are all toward God,—to come with all these feelings is not to come "unworthily." It is but little or no trial of our faith to believe that Jesus loves us, until we have become "convinced of sin;" it is when we are truly convinced of sin that the trial of our faith comes; to be able to realise that though guilty we are beloved; that He is ready to receive us as we are, not waiting until we are holier, else we should never come; but,

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee;
O Lamb of God! I come."

He is showing you yourself, that He may draw you nearer into His presence, and not repel you from it. It is by showing you what *you* are that He would show you what He is,—as one has written, "The trembling, self-accusing consciousness of sin, while it makes us fear to draw near, makes us still more afraid to stay away. It is our sin which makes us unworthy, and yet our sin is the necessity which forces us to His feet." Where all

this is felt, we shall never approach the Lord's Table in a superstitious spirit. I doubt that we shall ever need exhortations to frequent it. Where there is *true* Repentance the "comfortable word" will never give false peace. It will not be of the nature of an anodyne, which lulls or stupefies, but it will be as balm, which heals the sin-sick soul. Examine yourself. Do not be afraid to search out your own heart, praying that you may have the help of the Holy Spirit to light up its innermost recesses. It may be that one is now reading these lines who *never* approaches the Lord's Table. You hear notice given that it will be celebrated on the Sunday following. To that you have become so accustomed that you hearken to it as to any other notice given out in Church. You say to yourself, "that is meant for communicants." You come to God's House on the Sunday following, and you look on the fair white linen cloth, and the sacred vessels, and the preparation which says, "Come, for all things are now ready," and yet you remain not to partake ! Perhaps wife and child remain, and come home after you, for they have been where you were not. Do you ever ask yourself, "Why is this so ?" You say to yourself, "Were I to go, I should go unworthily. I fear to communicate. I am not fit." Why ? Is sin indulged ? Do you love sin better than you love yourself ? If you are not fit to communicate, are you fit to die ; fit to appear before God ; fit for the joys of the redeemed ? While you are reading, pause and think, and put these questions silently to yourself. Preach to yourself. Examine yourself. Surely there must be

something wrong somewhere in your life that is keeping you back from doing what you feel you ought to do ! And may it not be one of the many "wiles of the devil" to insinuate that you would, were you to communicate, communicate unworthily ; and then that is converted into an "excuse," and seems to satisfy you ? It sounds plausible ; nay, you might even be commended for your sensitive fear, lest you should be doing wrong. Oh ! rather than listen to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely, fear not, for your soul's sake, to pray God the Holy Ghost to convince you of sin, that you may see it and yourself in no false and luring light, but in its true ; that there may be a discovery to yourself of the relation in which every unrepentant sinner stands to a just and holy God ; that you may be led to true and godly sorrow for sin through the path of true Repentance ere it be too late, ere you find no place for Repentance, though you seek it carefully with tears ! You that are weary and heavy laden well know that there is no weariness like that of indwelling sin, no burden so great, until we have found the Cross and cast it there. So far from staying away from, what hope for you but in coming to a loving, living, present Saviour ? True our sin makes us unworthy of that great, that wondrous love ; and yet is it not our sin and our unworthiness of that love which makes His love so great in receiving us ? Believe in that love. Take God at His word. Plead His promises. Accept His gracious invitation. Say the words of that invitation over and over again to yourself, to reassure yourself of it. He is speaking to you and yours

as He spake of old. He will lift up the light of His countenance upon you. He will say to you asking for forgiveness, "Go thy way, thy sins are forgiven thee." He will say to you praying for more light, more grace, more purity, more faith, "Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt." He will say to you in the hour of the soul's conflicts and strifes, in the storm and tempest of newly-awakened or revived conviction of sin, "Be still! be at rest."

"I have a treasure which I prize,
Its like I cannot find.
There's nothing like it on the earth :
'Tis this—a quiet mind.

"But 'tis not that I'm stupefied,
Or senseless, dull, or blind.
'Tis God's own peace within my heart
Which forms my quiet mind.

"I found this treasure at the cross ;
And there to every kind
Of weary, heavy-laden souls,
Christ gives a quiet mind.

"My Saviour's death and risen life
To give it were designed.
His love, the never-failing spring
Of this my quiet mind.

"The love of God within my heart—
My heart to Him doth bind :
This is the peace of heaven on earth—
This is my quiet mind."

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

III.

FAITH.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (St. John iii. 16).

The second of the "COMFORTABLE WORDS."

IN the Address immediately preceding the present, I dwelt on *Repentance* as one of the conditions of *worthy* Communion, and as the very *first* requisite of worthy Communion. Repentance precedes Faith in the order of grace. We do not believe savingly until we have repented truly; for this reason, that the work of Jesus is not and cannot be so *realised* as to be apprehended and appropriated until and unless we first realise the *need* of this Atonement. We must be brought to a humbling conviction and abasing consciousness of personal guilt, before the "Great Salvation" wrought for us by Jesus Christ can be understood and appreciated. I trust I have already made this so clear, that to dwell any further upon it were but needless repetition. Where true Repentance is experienced there cannot but arise in the mind a sense of demerit. Just in proportion as we realise the love of God in Christ toward us, we realise our *unworthiness* of that wondrous love. As we feel ourselves guilty and yet beloved, the thought of a love

manifested toward us "while we were yet sinners," is almost overpowering. The Evangelist himself is at a loss for language in which to express his sense of it. "God so loved" is the limited and yet limitless expression of a love boundless, fathomless, inexhaustible. Inasmuch, then, as a sense of unworthiness of that love is the "first-fruit," so to speak, of true Repentance; as the conviction of the greatness of that undeserved love invariably and uniformly, I believe, accompanies "godly sorrow" for sin, so it is the most becoming feeling with which we can approach the Lord's Table. This sense of unworthiness, if it have its root in a true view of sin, in that view which God the Holy Ghost gives us of sin, will bear the flower of Faith. It is *the* feeling which should bring us to Holy Communion. It is the last which should deter us from communicating at that Holy Table where Christ, as the propitiation for sin, is "evidently set forth." And so, consistently with the evangelical view of Repentance, we find its necessity pre-eminently enforced. It stands in the very forefront of the conditions of worthy Communion. In every instruction or admonition connected with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the need of Repentance is insisted upon as the prime condition on which the grace or blessing is conveyed. And confession of sin the most self-condemning, self-accusing, precedes, on our part, those assurances of forgiveness and acceptance which have no meaning and no real comfort until we have felt the burden of our unforgiven sin, and the awfulness of an unreconciled state. It is, it must be, first evening and then morning,

and we may apply the Christian Poet's words to this spiritual experience which, like the light of heaven, is unvaried and uniform.

" 'Tis first the good and then the beautiful,
Not first the beautiful and then the good :
First the rough seed, sown in the rougher soil,
Then the flower-blossom, or the branching wood.

" Not first the glad and then the sorrowful,
But first the sorrowful and then the glad.
Tears for a day ; for earth of tears is full,
Then we forget that we were ever sad."

—BONAR.

For surely there must be some blessing beyond this Repentance : something to which Repentance leads, something to which it is preparatory. If it be true that humbling conviction of personal sinfulness must be felt before we can appreciate the blessing of pardon, where that sinfulness is felt the pardon awaits the contrite. As the shadow on the sun-dial tells us of the sun, as light lies behind the lurid thunder-cloud, so to the soul, sin-convicted and sin-stricken, there comes the revelation of infinite, exhaustless love. And what but *love* could have moved the Father to give His only Son for us ? What but love could have constrained Him to give Himself for us ? The love of God is from everlasting, for God is love. God has loved us from all eternity. The death of Christ does not make God more loving towards His creatures than He has ever been ; for this were to make Him changeable. The death of Christ is a special *manifestation* of that love : it is yet further

evidence and proof of the love of God, Who gave Himself for us, that we might not perish everlastingly. And He Who would have all men to be saved, Who willeth not the death of a sinner, but that all men should repent and be saved, is ready and willing, and waiting to forgive, to receive, to save all that believe in Him. So we find this to be the second condition of worthy Communion, "that we have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ." The "benefit" is declared to be great "if with a true, penitent heart and lively faith we receive that Holy Sacrament." We are bidden to "draw near with faith." When the consecrated elements are administered we accompany the individual administration with these familiar words—"Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving." The prayers which follow are the expression of a lively faith in the benefits of Christ's Passion; and all throughout the Office of Holy Communion, *faith* on the part of the recipient is made a condition of worthy participation in its privileges. It is not that faith saves us, for that would be to make a Saviour of our feelings. All that faith does is to enable us to apprehend and appropriate the benefits of Christ's Passion, personally and individually to our own souls. We can do nothing in the matter of our salvation beyond what is already done for us. It is for us to repent and to believe, because salvation is ours, not by works, nor yet by praying, but by *believing*. Hence we find Faith essential to *worthy* Communion. It can have no value apart from faith.

It is not in the *use* so much as in the *believing* use of means of grace that Christian people are wanting. And yet how great and encouraging are the promises to them that believe! "All things are possible to him that believeth." What more could be said or promised by way of encouragement to believe, and of the momentous results of lively faith than is said and pledged in these words: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, to the end that all that *believe* in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"? Can we not well understand why "believing" should be so insisted on in the reception of the Lord's Supper? For of what is that Holy Sacrament the standing, enduring memorial? Is it not of a Saviour's love, and of a love He would have us know and feel and trust? And He is to us there as if He were on earth; in no carnal, corporeal, or superstitious sense, but only after a heavenly manner, *spiritually* present. In that Holy Sacrament the object of faith is Christ. It is, let us say it with all reverence, the form in which He offers Himself to us, not present locally, and in a place, but as the *occasion* when He suffers us to draw nigh, as penitents drew nigh to Him in the days of His flesh. He says to us, as it were, "reach hither thy finger." And yet it is not the sensible touch of the hand, for thus we cannot touch Him, it is the unfelt touch of faith. It was not the hand which drew forth the healing virtue that went out of Him, but faith, of which the hand was but the instrument. It was not the garment which had power to stanch the twelve years' issue, but He Who wore the

garment. So we touch still ; and so virtue streams forth still from the now glorified Saviour, stanching the wounds sin has made, and healing all our infirmities. You evidence your faith most truly just as you most feel your sinfulness and trust His gracious word. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance!" Again, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was *lost*." Imagine, for a moment, that Jesus were once more in our midst as He was of old ! Picture to your mind's eye the loving Son of man, Whose very mien and countenance must have attracted the spell-bound multitude ! Ah ! who amongst you, with even the measure of faith you *now* have in Him, investing His very name with a halo of sentiment, and even now drawn to Him by feelings you can ill define, would not be of the very first to press into His presence, to ask of Him that He would forgive you ; to pray of Him to put forth His hand to heal, or speak the word of power to raise ? How many a timid, fearful Christian would say now, as of old, "If I may but touch His clothes I shall be whole." Say this now. Many of you must be sick at heart through thought of sin. Many of you must know the burden of sin unforgiven. Many of you are afraid to die because your sins are not forgiven you. Many of you know the heart-ache where God's peace is not. What more can we say to you than "only believe !" Faint, feeble, weak, imperfect as your faith is, still draw nigh. "He will not bruise the broken reed, nor quench the smoking flax." It is not difficult to believe He loves a *saint*, the trial of faith is that He loves

the repentant *sinner*. Amidst doubts, misgivings, fears, self-chidings, bring your sin-sick soul into His unseen Presence; not doubting His word; not doubting His willingness; not doubting His power to save. Plead His promises. Say, "Lord I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." Take with you words. Take with you, as you kneel in His Presence, some promise of His own. Ask the Holy Spirit to enable you more fully, more confidently to believe, and then you need not fear that you are approaching unworthily. You will feel you are only doing as He bids you do, and that peace which passeth all understanding will be your own, as you are given of the Holy Ghost yet deeper realisation of the truth of this comfortable word:—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face to face—
 Here faith can touch and handle things unseen—
 Here would I grasp with firmer hand Thy grace,
 And all my weariness upon Thee lean.

"Here would I feed upon the bread of God,
 Here drink with Thee the royal wine of heaven;
 Here would I lay aside each earthly load,
 Here taste afresh the calm of sin forgiven.

"Mine is the sin, but Thine the righteousness;
 Mine is the guilt, but Thine the cleansing blood;
 Here is my robe, my refuge, and my peace,
 Thy blood, Thy righteousness, O Lord, my God.

“ Too soon we rise : the symbols disappear ;
The feast, though rich the love, is passed and gone ;
The bread and wine remove, but Thou art here—
Nearer than ever—still my shield and sun.

“ Feast after feast thus comes and passes by,
Yet passing, points to the glad feast above,
Giving sweet foretastes of the festal joy,
The Lamb's great bridal feast of bliss and love.”

IV.

THANKSGIVING.

"This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15).

The third of the "COMFORTABLE WORDS."

(Prayer Book Version.)

IN my two former Addresses, delivered to Communicants at the early celebration during a "Mission," I have, with the consecutive teaching of a Mission, enlarged upon the two first conditions of worthy Communion in their evangelical order, viz.: *Repentance* and *Faith*. I have endeavoured to explain the nature of that "godly sorrow" for sin which is a "repentance not repented of," and of that Faith which is necessarily preceded by Repentance. I have endeavoured to show that we cannot believe savingly until we have repented truly, and that where Repentance is *true*, i.e., arising from true, spirit-taught views of sin, there follows that Faith by which we savingly appropriate a salvation discovered to the soul given to see its need of a Saviour, and by which we are enabled and emboldened to say, "My Lord and my God." Humbling conviction of sin, producing a humbling conviction of personal demerit, is, therefore, the first condition of worthy communion. A sense of unworthiness of the Saviour's love, is the very feeling

that should bring us near Him, and not that which should deter from communicating. We evidence and most truly exercise a "lively *faith*" when we take Him at His gracious word, and act upon His own invitation, when He says,—“Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He came “not to call the righteous, but *sinner*s to repentance.” He came “to seek and to save that which was *lost*.” Just as we are given personally, each one for himself and herself, to *realise* this, we realise how great the *love* of God in Christ toward us ; we realise how earnestly true, and how worthy of all acceptance is this faithful saying, this saying to be relied and acted upon, “That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

What is the feeling that cannot but be awakened in the soul given to realise this love, as wonderful as undeserved ? First, perhaps, that of *wonder* at the thought of such unmerited love towards our sinful selves, and this giving place to a *joy* the world knows not of, to a peace the world cannot give, and cannot take away. We have “joy and peace in believing.” The *degree* in which this joy and even this peace will be experienced, varies. Individual temperament must not, I think, be quite ignored. In some cases the emotions are more strongly excited than in others. Feeling comes more quickly to the surface. It is less easily repressed. It is more readily and visibly exhibited. With others, feeling is not less strong, not less vivid, not less real, but the nature is more phlegmatic, or it has even been a study and habit to repress feeling. *The “joy” is, I think, often*

proportioned to the cause of joy. In some cases the life from childhood has been comparatively guileless. It has been sheltered from the evil of the world within a Christian home, and the heart is ignorant of the world's ways. There has been a marked inclination of the soul Godward from so far as memory can recall; the conversion has been so gradual, and so much of the will, that it has taken place unmarked by any crisis of feeling, or by any such conscious breaking away from the past, as some experience. In such instances, "joy" is not felt so vividly, nor so intensely, but it is not that there is no rejoicing. Where the life past has been very sinful, wayward, rebellious; where God, in His infinite loving-kindness, has arrested one in a life of thoughtlessness, indifference, and unconcern; where memory is charged with the recollection of sins more in number than the hairs of our head; where we realise ourselves "guilty and yet beloved," there the joy that accompanies conversion and the discovery of Jesus' love, is always and naturally greater. The life past explains the present joy; so true is it, "Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." I have known more than one instance in which true conversion was accompanied with so little joy, that another who could not contain herself for joy, doubted the reality of her friend's conversion, and pained and, for a time, disquieted her by saying it could not be true. And yet it was real and true. Conversion does not depend on, no more than it consists in, strong or feeble feeling. It is a question

of *fact*, independent of feeling. It may exist, and yet without any great fervour of experience. It is not unfrequently accompanied with a joy which, for the moment, "brings all Heaven before our eyes." But in whatever degree experienced, it finds expression in, as it is the occasion of *Praise*. Praise is the key-note of our Communion Service. Rightly do we call Holy Communion the *Eucharist*. It is the highest of all acts of worship. Does it need embellishment? The soul awakened to a sense of what the Lord's Supper sets forth, needs not that refined gold should be gilded. It has a beauty, a dignity, a value of its own, to which but little may be added of external ritual to enhance what is already felt by the adoring soul. So, on the other hand, it is rightly regarded by our Church as her culminating office. Why is it the highest of all our acts of worship? Because it is the Service of Praise and Thanksgiving. Praise is loftier than Prayer. Prayer bears the tokens of the fall. The time is coming when Prayer shall be no more heard, save where it will be unavailing. Praise is thankful, lowly, loving worship, springing from a consciousness of blessings received. God speaks to us with the descent of blessings; we speak to Him with the ascent of thanksgiving. It has its source in a sense of our utter unworthiness, and in the light of our unworthiness, all God's mercies and lovingkindness toward us are converted into a revelation of infinite compassion. It has its highest source in the felt, pure love of God; not only as the bountiful Giver of all good temporal gifts, but as loving us before we

loved Him, and so loving us as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. And for this we praise God ; especially do we praise Him at Holy Communion for redeeming grace. Our Catechism, in reply to the question, ‘ What is required of them who come to the Lord’s Supper,’ thus frames the answer for us, ‘ With a thankful remembrance of His death.’ In the Exhortation of the Communion office, we say, “ Above all things ye must give most humble and hearty thanks to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the redemption of the world, by the death and passion of, our Saviour Christ, both God and Man.” Together, with the administration of the elements, we say, “ Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart by faith *with thanksgiving.*” Again, “ Drink this in remembrance that Christ’s blood was shed for thee, and *be thankful.*” In the prayer that follows, when all have communicated, we pray our heavenly Father “ Mercifully to accept this our *sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving,*” and from the posture of prayer, we rise to join in the “ Gloria in Excelsis,” being nothing less than a paraphrase and expansion of the angelic hymn which broke on midnight silence, and announced to a waiting and perishing world, the advent of a Saviour. So that even here on earth, praise is mingled with our prayer, as an earnest of blessing beyond all blessing, as a foretaste of heaven.

How can we join in utterances so full of praise, unless we have been given to feel a Saviour’s love, and to

realise from what we have, by His precious death, been redeemed? In the lips of an unawakened, unconverted man, such language as our Church puts into the lips of communicants is unreal, and exaggerated. He says what he does not feel; and before such an one thinks of partaking, he would do well to pause, and ask himself,—“Have I indeed so felt the burden and guilt of sin, that I have seen myself *lost* without Christ, and is love awakened in me expressing itself in adoring gratitude through sense of the great love which has saved *me* from death eternal?” Surely, this is a test each one of us ought to put to ourselves; for the Prayer Book, we repeat, is the language of *believers*, and in their lips alone is the language of the Communion office not unreal.

To such as realise what sin is, and what forgiveness is; to such as know the “broken and contrite heart,” and have found peace in a Saviour, revealed and apprehended, the Holy Communion is the fit occasion for expressing your grateful sense of redeeming love. Surely we cannot too often acknowledge all the inestimable benefits of Christ’s Passion. The question of frequent or infrequent Communion is not, or, at least, *ought* not to be, a question of differing schools of thought. There ought to be but *one* thought respecting Holy Communion. It is the standing memorial of a Saviour’s love. The loving heart, saturate with the spirit of gratitude, ought not to need to be provoked to communicate, no more than it should be disturbed or discouraged by cautions, lest too frequent communicating degenerate into a superstitious use of this great means of grace. In proportion

as we grow in grace, we shall set higher value on Holy Communion, because we grow in grace, as convictions of personal sinfulness are deepened within us, and our need of grace is more and more perceived. So often, also, as we communicate, we have opportunity afforded us for a fresh dedication of ourselves to God, and a renewed presenting of ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Him ; humbly beseeching Him that we may be fulfilled with His grace and heavenly benediction, and enabled to walk more worthy of the great love wherewith He has loved us.

Approach, then, His gracious Presence, not only confessing your sin, and saying, "Lord, I believe," seeking the virtue that streams from Him into sin-sick, trusting souls, but come with thoughts and words of thanksgiving and praise. Thank Him for His great love. Praise Him for redeeming grace. Praise and thank, thank and praise Him for what He has been, and is to you, or to others dear to you : for every voice of His chiding or recalling Spirit ; for His willingness and readiness to receive and bless you ; for the light that has shone or been rekindled in your soul ; for the repentance and faith which are gifts of the Spirit ; and for that hope of future glory, of which you have now the earnest, the Spirit bearing witness with your spirit, that you are a dear, loved, because reconciled, child of God.

" Jesus ! why dost Thou love me so ?
 What hast Thou seen in me
 To make my happiness so great,
 So dear a joy to Thee !

“ Wert Thou not God, I then might think
 Thou hadst no eye to read
 The badness of that selfish heart,
 For which Thine own did bleed.

“ But Thou art God, and knowest all ;
 Dear Lord ! Thou knowest me ;
 And yet Thy knowledge hinders not
 Thy love’s sweet liberty.

“ Ah, how Thy grace hath wooed my soul
 With persevering wiles !
 Now give me tears to weep ; for tears
 Are deeper joy than smiles.

“ Each proof renewed of Thy great love
 Humbles me more and more,
 And brings to light forgotten sins,
 And lays them at my door.

“ The more I love Thee, Lord ! the more
 I hate my own cold heart ;
 The more Thou woundest me with love,
 The more I feel the smart.

“ What shall I do, then, dearest Lord !
 Say, shall I fly from Thee,
 And hide my poor unloving self
 Where thou canst never see ?

“ Or shall I pray that Thy dear love
 To me might not be given ?
 Ah no ! love must be pain on earth,
 If it be bliss in heaven.”

—FABER.

V.

CHARITY.

"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another :
as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

—ST. JOHN xiii. 34.

THUS far, in the three preceding Addresses delivered at the early celebration, throughout a Mission, I have set before you and dwelt upon the conditions of *worthy Communion*, viz. : Repentance, Faith, and Thanksgiving. I have sought to show the relation in which these stand the one to the other. I have explained the nature of true Repentance ; of "godly sorrow," as distinct from the "sorrow of the world which worketh death." Repentance must be a *distinct, personal, conscious* act. It springs up in the mind in view of *perceived, personal guilt*. It cannot be true unless and until we see sin as God looks upon sin. For until we sin as *against God*, we shall not *hate* it, nor shall we understand the need of an *atonement* for the broken law of a holy God. The first requisite, therefore, of *worthy Communion*, as it is the first condition of salvation, is *Repentance*. We must "examine ourselves whether we repent us truly of our former sins ; steadfastly purposing to lead a new life." We must not draw near the Lord's Table without

previous self-examination, and by this is meant, not a surface glance over our life and ways, nor vague and general confessions of sinfulness, but that searching and detailed probing of our hearts, in the sought aid and light of the Holy Spirit, which gives an insight into the evil within us, and brings to light the hidden things of darkness, so that we confess the commission of particular sins, or lament the omission of manifold duties. Then the language our Church puts into our lips is not unreal, but, self-abasing though it be, it is earnestly and intensely true. This lowly, self-accusing spirit, which writes bitter things against ourselves, and acknowledges nothing but demerit and unworthiness, is a prime condition of *worthy* Communion. It brings us within the sphere and exercise of that *forgiveness* which is freely theirs who earnestly and unreservedly *believe*. Repentance precedes Faith. We must first be given to feel our *need* of a Saviour, before we can believe in a Saviour; and we must have been brought to a humbling conviction of our lost state by nature, before we shall look out beyond and from ourselves for One Who can save us from eternal consequences of that wrath of God which abideth on every soul not reconciled to Him by faith in Him Who died to redeem us from all iniquity. It is *given* to us to *believe* savingly, as it is *given* to us to *repent* truly, and whenever we do repent truly, we do believe savingly. Why? Because the Holy Ghost, Who convinces of sin, reveals the Saviour to the sin-sick, sin-convicted soul. The conviction of sin and the revelation of Jesus are alike *supernatural*. They are facts which belong to

the *spiritual* world. They are amongst the phenomena, if we may so speak, of the spiritual world. We can neither repent truly nor believe savingly of our own fallen nature or unaided faculties. To repent and to believe are of the Holy Ghost, and I will go so far as to say, that these are as cause and effect. Belief follows upon Repentance, for this reason, that the discovery of our real state, the Spirit-occasioned revelation to us of ourselves were overpowering in its self-condemnatory result, were it not that together with—or quick upon it—(I speak from experience), there is discovered to us—. I can use no other phrase—a living, loving, present Saviour; and in the joy, the bliss, the Heaven of that discovery, the wondering and yet rejoicing soul apprehends Christ, appropriates Christ, and as it sees and feels Him to be, so it unreservedly acknowledges Him, “My Lord—my God.” Saving faith is not of intellect, it is of the *heart*: it is less of the reason than of the will; and if you would so believe that you may have “joy and peace in believing,” it must be not so much that your sins *may* be forgiven you, but because they *are* forgiven you. And what feeling can but arise in the soul, bruised and healed, contrite and revived? What is the feeling that is awakened in the experience of any great temporal blessing, such as recovery from the gates of the grave, felt preservation from a peril or death which seemed inevitable? The feeling of *joy* is awakened, a feeling which finds utterance, expression, in *praise*. See how evangelical is the teaching of our Church in this her highest office of Holy Communion! She bids

you first *repent* before you believe ; She bids you see that you have that "*lively faith*" in God's mercy, through Christ, which comes with your conviction of the need of mercy ; She bids you come with a *thankful* remembrance of His death, with that praise which is the key-note of the Communion Service, or, better still, of the *Eucharist*, but which you cannot come with without having experienced all which leads up to, as it inspires, thanksgiving and praise. These are three conditions of worthy Communion ; these you can apply as tests or questions to yourselves, each one individually and separately, for himself and for herself, because we cannot repent and believe for one another. Do I repent ? Do I believe ? Do I know what it is to be able to *praise* God for His great love to *me* in Jesus Christ ? How few, or how many, put such questions as *these* to themselves before they communicate ? How many ask themselves, "When did I last communicate ? Need I communicate so soon again ?" Or how many care not to inquire into that which constitutes real worthiness, and, for want of inquiry, excuse their not communicating, under a plea that sounds plausible, but would not bear examination, viz., that they do not feel themselves *worthy*. How many, or how few, I venture to repeat, ask themselves—Do I repent ? Do I believe ? Can I praise ? And yet one condition and one test more of worthy Communion—last but not least—"Am I in perfect charity with all men ?" This condition is more than once insisted upon. It is enjoined in the Catechism in reply to the question, "What is required

of them who come to the Lord's Supper?" In the Exhortation we are bidden, "Amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men." In the words immediately preceding the Confession we are thus addressed, "Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours." That we should be in love and charity with all men is the last named condition of worthy Communion. "So shall ye be meet partakers of these holy mysteries." And why? The Lord's Supper is a standing memorial of the exceeding great *love* of our Master, and only Saviour Jesus Christ. What but *love* could have moved Him to give Himself for you and me? Wherever the Holy Spirit has wrought efficaciously and truly, the perception of that *love* is awakened. "We love Him because He first loved us." Our hearts, quickened by the Spirit, *respond* to that love, as everything in nature reflects the sunlight it receives. It is not because of *our* love that He loves us, it is because of His love that we love Him. The day-star must rise, and the sun must pierce the clouds of night, before nature can reflect a single ray. And where this love is awakened, we live in a *new* spirit, we work from a *new* motive. There is a keeping of God's commandments out of slavish *fear*. There is a keeping of God's commandments from a spirit of adoption. There is "a covenant from Mount Sinai which gendereth to bondage." There is a new covenant, and in virtue of it we have the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people *free*. We may keep God's commandments out of fear of the consequences of His

broken law, out of *fear* of Him. There is a higher spirit in which to obey Him; there is a finer motive from which to do His will. And that is from love. It is not that we *dare* not sin; it is that we *cannot* sin. It is not that we abstain from sin because He says, "Thou shalt not." We have learned how He hates sin; and knowing His love for us, we would not do what He hates, what crucifies the Son of God afresh and puts Him to open shame, what grieves His loving and gracious Spirit. So that as a test of our love, a new commandment is added to the old. The living by this new commandment is one of the safest tests of a true conversion. "By this we *know* that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments." Yet more strongly. "We *know* that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." There can be no true love for God, say what we will, so long as we do not love one another; for this reason, that that love, one for another, is *the* evidence of our love to God, as a tree is known by its fruits. When, therefore, you draw near to the Lord's Supper, oh! see that there be in you nothing, so far as you know, or will, at variance with His character and spirit; no wilful cherishing of a spirit at variance with His own, unloving, unforgiving, uncharitable, unkind. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy ways: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Repentance, Faith, Praise; do not these seem

facile conditions compared with this last, without which there can be no real blessing in communicating? These seem to be the more immediate and proper work of the Holy Ghost, acting directly and supernaturally on our hearts. This last seems to be a condition with which we ourselves have more to do, more to overcome, more to resolve. It is a hard world to live in; the longer we live in it the more difficult does it seem to "live peaceably with all men." This not only because of sin in ourselves, tempers easily provoked, feelings readily irritated, sensibilities quickly pained, but because of contradiction, chafing, wrongs from without. There are who will not let you live peaceably. Theirs is a "cantankerous" spirit, to which strife of tongues is music. They seem to carry about with them a sore which every hand frets. They interfere from a spirit of interference, or are tenacious to irritability of rights which no one questions. They are like tinder, on which a spark may at any moment fall and set on blaze a whole world of angry words, and smothered revengeful feeling. Then not to speak of deeper wrongs done, by which a life's happiness or a life's peace is gone; of strife, malice, contention, of likes and dislikes, of prejudices, estrangements, and differences by which the equable and calm spirit of love is grieved within the communion of the Church, there is the injury done to character by busy and slanderous tongues, that great pest and curse of social life. It comes to your ears that things, untrue and unkind, have been said by those who to your face were friendly and fair. Whisperers, backbiters, scandal-

mongers, who live on gossip, and make everybody's business their own,—these are as thorns and scorpions in the world. Jealousy, envy, and impatience of superiority, how fruitful are these of unkindly words: Quick tempers, hasty expressions, sullenness of spirit, readiness to take offence, unwillingness to allow yourself wrong, none of these, and the like of these, are the feelings with which to approach the Lord's Table. Nor is that a true genuine "charity" which says, "*I forgive, but I cannot forget.*" In one sense we cannot *forget*; that belongs to an exercise of the mind which, to a large extent, is not under our control. Memory is a reflex action of the mind, which is sometimes spontaneous, called into exercise by some trifling circumstance, or unlooked-for incident. In such case we cannot *forget*. The mention of a name, revisiting a scene, may recall the memory of a great wrong, or of some temptation or solicitation to evil. All this, it is true, we *cannot* forget. But when we recall and remember it, it is to *forgive it*, to pray that we may be ourselves forgiven for any occasion or excuse we may have afforded for resentment or anger, and not to remember it with heart-burnings, and a secret spirit of revenge. Specially when you draw near the Holy Table, pray for a spirit of charity. Ask God to forgive those who have wronged you. Ask God to help you to forgive as you have been forgiven. *Love is His gift*. He is love. His Spirit dwells in His redeemed, and the whole work of the Spirit is a work of love, gathering together in one the children of God which are scattered abroad. As of old the ointment

flowed down from Aaron's beard and went down to the skirts of his clothing, so pray we our great High Priest that His love may flow down into our hearts, and overflow upon all with whom we live. Thus *repenting* of our own sins, for which we need forgiveness; *believing* in the great Absolver; *praising* His Holy Name for sins forgiven, and loving one another, as He gave us commandment, God's love is perfected on earth. And our Communion here are foretastes, antepasts, of that communion hereafter, where sin shall be no more to be repented of and forgiven; where faith shall give place to sight; where praise will be our endless song; and where God's love and peace in our hearts shall flow as a river.

“ O God ! whose thoughts are brightest light,
Whose love always runs clear,
To whose kind wisdom sinning souls
Amidst their sins are dear !

“ Sweeten my bitter-thoughted heart
With charity like Thine,
Till self shall be the only spot
On earth which does not shine.

“ Hard-heartedness dwells not with souls
Round whom Thine arms are drawn ;
And dark thoughts fade away in grace,
Like cloud-spots in the dawn.

“ I often see in my own thoughts,
When nearest Thee they lie,
That the worst men I ever knew
Were better men than I.

“ And of all truths no other truth
 So true as this one seems ;
 While others' faults, that plainest were,
 Grow indistinct as dreams.

“ All men look good except ourselves,
 All but ourselves are great ;
 The rays, that make our sins so clear,
 Their faults obliterate.

“ Things, that appeared undoubted sins,
 Wear little crowns of light ;
 Their dark, remaining darkness still,
 Shames and outshines our bright.

“ Time was, when I believed that wrong
 In others to detect,
 Was part of genius, and a gift
 To cherish, not reject.

“ Now better taught by Thee, O Lord !
 This truth dawns on my mind,—
 The best effect of heavenly light
 Is earth's false eyes to blind.

“ Thou art the Unapproached, whose height
 Enables Thee to stoop,
 Whose holiness bends undefiled
 To handle hearts that droop.

“ He, whom no praise can reach, is aye
 Men's least attempts approving ;
 Whom justice makes all-merciful,
 Omniscience makes all-loving.

“ How thou canst think so well of us,
 Yet be the God Thou art,
 Is darkness to my intellect,
 But sunshine to my heart.

- " Yet habits linger in the soul ;
 More grace, O Lord ! more grace !
 More sweetness from Thy loving heart,
 More sunshine from Thy face !
- " When we ourselves least kindly are,
 We deem the world unkind ;
 Dark hearts, in flowers where honey lies,
 Only the poison find.
- " We paint from self the evil things
 We think that others are ;
 While to the self-despising soul
 All things but self are fair.
- " Yes, they have caught the way of God,
 To whom self lies displayed
 In such clear vision as to cast
 O'er others' faults a shade.
- " A bright horizon out at sea
 Obscures the distant ships ;
 Rough hearts look smooth and beautiful
 In charity's eclipse.
- " Love's changeful mood our neighbours' faults
 O'erwhelms with burning ray,
 And in excess of splendour hides
 What is not burned away.
- " Again, with truth like God's, it shades
 Harsh things with untrue light,
 Like moons that make a fairy-land
 Of fallow fields at night.
- " Then mercy, Lord ! more mercy still !
 Make me all light within,
 Self-hating and compassionate,
 And blind to others' sin.

" I need Thy mercy for my sin ;
 But more than this I need,—
 Thy mercy's likeness in my soul
 For others' sin to bleed.

" 'Tis not enough to weep my sins ;
 'Tis but one step to heaven :
 When I am kind to others, then
 I know myself forgiven.

" Would that my soul might be a world
 Of golden ether bright,
 A heaven, where other souls might float,
 Like all Thy worlds, in light.

" All bitterness is from ourselves,
 All sweetness is from Thee ;
 Sweet God ! for evermore be Thou
 Fountain and fire in me."

—FABER.

VI.

SINS OF INFIRMITY.

“ My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous : And He is the propitiation for our sins.”—1 JOHN ii. 1, 2.

THUS far we have considered together, I trust not without mutual profit, the conditions of *worthy* Communion. I have enlarged on Repentance, Faith, Thanksgiving, and Charity, and in showing the relation these have one to the other, have also sought to show you how strictly evangelical is the teaching of our Prayer Book. In reply to the question in one of her familiar formularies : “ What is required of them who come to the Lord’s Supper ? ” we answer — “ To examine themselves, whether they *repent* them truly of their former sins ; steadfastly purposing to lead a new life ; have a lively *faith* in God’s mercy through Christ, with a *thankful* remembrance of His death ; and be in *charity* with all men.” I have pointed out, step by step, for your encouragement, or warning, as the case may be, how Repentance, *i.e.*, “ godly sorrow,” precedes “ lively, saving Faith ; ” how the feeling of *joy*, finding expression in *Praise*, cannot precede its immediate cause, and how there can be no real *Love* one for another except in so

far as we realise the love of God in Christ toward us, who died for us even while we were yet sinners. It is surely as harmful to the soul to approach Holy Communion without searching self-examination as to whether or not these conditions of worthy Communion be fulfilled, as it is helpful to partake of it when we can truthfully and sincerely say that they are fulfilled. It is incredible that conditions such as these should be associated with worthy Communion, and that we should partake of the Lord's Supper, deeming it a matter of indifference whether or not we repent, believe, are grateful, and loving. On the other hand, while there can be no more fitting preparation for our Lord's second coming, and our "seeing Him as He is," than frequent Communion, where these conditions are the frequent exercises of the spiritual life, what must their state before God be, what their preparation for death, what their preparation for one day seeing Christ, who *never* communicate? What awful *unreality*, to be using prayers expressive of our belief in His second coming, even prayers which express the *desire* that He would come; what awful *unreality* in the hymns we sing and by using are committed to, if all the while there be no preparation for that great event, and if the one ordinance in and by which we "show forth" or "declare" "His death until He come," be *the* one which is the most neglected and turned from! We have, indeed, to guard against superstition, and that view of the Lord's Supper which would convert it into magic or charm; but we have also to watch against *unreality* in our utterances, when we do communicate. And if

I have seemed to any to repeat myself, or to have needlessly gone over the same ground again, I must excuse this on the plea that there is in some cases a certain value in repetition. My object is twofold, viz., to utter a word of timely caution to those who take a wrong view of Holy Communion, and partake of it without fulfilling the condition of worthy Communion, thereby encouraging themselves in such a conception of it as differs little from the *opus operatum* of the Romanist, and to encourage those to partake of it who, from mistaken notions of worthiness and unworthiness, need to realise that the consciousness of sin not *indulged* but *repented* of, as distinct from sin *indulged* and *unrepented* of, is the very feeling which should bring them to, and not keep them back from, Him who came to seek and save that which was lost. And assuming that I am now addressing some such here, as our Prayer Book, in the language and attitude of *believers*, assumes communicants to be, sin-convicted, sorrowing after a godly sort, with full purpose of amendment, forgiven, reconciled, coming to the Lord's Table "with faith," not to give but to receive, there is yet this fourth "comfortable word," which is my subject to-day, and of which we are reminded in the familiar words, "Draw near with faith and take this Holy Sacrament to your *comfort*; and make your humble confession to Almighty God, meekly kneeling upon your knees." Such as these are addressed and encouraged by the endearing term of "*children*," because such are "sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty." Such as these are "*children*,"

not only by creation, but by adoption and grace. A child of God ! How blessed, how privileged, how restful the relationship ! Forgiven, it is true. Reconciled, it is true. Accepted in the Beloved, it is also true, and yet sinful and liable to fall into sin ! " If any man sin " would not have been written or spoken, nor would it ever have been addressed to such as these, if acceptance of Christ meant sinlessness. " If any man sin " would not have been written or spoken if sin after baptism or conversion could not be possible, and, if possible, were beyond forgiveness. By conversion we get an insight into the *guilt* of sin ; but conversion is not *sanctification*, it is not heaven. The unconverted man is far, very far, from the kingdom of God. He is separate, *longo intervallo*, from the children of God ; he is yet under the wrath of God ; he has not passed from death unto life, from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God. The converted, the reconciled, the accepted, have experienced this crisis, this passage of Jordan, this translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son, but they have not parted with their sinful nature, its inborn tendencies, its native inclinations, its ingrained propensities. They are not in heaven, nor even yet transfigured. *They* may be changed, but the *world* remains the same. They are not at once transferred to that happier land where " the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." They are not taken out of, but they are left in the world. And the world, with its temptations, enticements, snares, pitfalls, syren voices, attractions, lures, will remain unchanged to the very end !

Two errors, which had soon crept into the Church of Christ, as tares sown among wheat, are combated and corrected in this particular Epistle of St. John. One was the error of the Docetæ, an off-shoot of Gnosticism, who maintained that Christ had not come really in the flesh, but that it was an illusion of the senses, and that nothing but a phantom was crucified. Hence the reason why St. John dwells so particularly on the fundamental Christian truth of the Incarnation; especially in the passage, "that which was from the beginning, which we have *heard*, which we have *seen* with our eyes, which we have *looked upon*, and our hands have *handled*, of the Word of life, that which we have *seen* and *heard* declare we unto you." The other error was that of the Nicolaitanes, who held that one born of God could not sin again; that conversion was everything; that knowledge of the truth and acceptance of Christ were synonymous with salvation. Such teaching, if true, could not but encourage and lead to a licentious life. In such teaching men, compassed with infirmity, could find only comfort and no danger. Paradoxical as it sounds, we are bidden "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." Frequent are the warnings against falling away from grace given. Solemn are the words spoken concerning those whose last state may be worse than the first. There is a work of *sanctification*. We are not only justified by faith, but we have to become holy, and holiness is also by faith. Hence the value of means of grace to a *believer*. Water is profitless to the plant that is dead. And the mere *forgiveness of sin* is an

inadequate and partial view of salvation. There is a present salvation. The "presentness" of salvation is the glad tidings of the Gospel. We are delivered from the *guilt* of sin ; freed from condemnation and from the wrath of God : we are delivered from the *dominion* of sin ; we are delivered from the *love* of sin. We need to be saved from the guilt, dominion, and love of sin. The first deliverance comes with forgiveness. So soon as we accept Christ, we are accepted and forgiven as if we had never sinned, as you forgive your child, and would deem it ungenerous and unforgiving to make mention of its fault again. And this forgiveness is very blessed. But we are still here. Forgiveness has to do with the *past*, not with the present. It deals with and effaces something done, not something not yet done. It does not touch the *present*. Forgiveness of the past is no security that your child will not sin again. It brings with it the hopeful earnest of love and tenderness, and encourages us to look for forgiveness again. We want not only to be forgiven, we want to be *kept*, "saved," or as the Greek word is also capable of being rendered, "*preserved*." One rescued from fire is not only snatched as a brand from the burning, but is put into a place of safety. Noah and his family were not only saved from, but saved in, the flood. God shut in His servants in the ark. Lot was not only delivered mercifully from the storm of brimstone, but was kept unharmed in Zoar. We want to be *kept*. Wonderful is that text, "Who are *kept*, by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time!" Perfection

is our goal, it is not our state. Who is there that attaineth to perfection here? When I have seen the perfect man I will believe in the perfect man. It is true that some are very ripe for glory. They have been matured by God's grace as plants of a Heavenly Father's planting. They have experienced the loving correction by which He would make them great. Theirs has been—

“ The process slow of years,
The discipline of life ;
Of outward woes, and secret tears,
Sickness and strife :
Thine idols taken from thee one by one,
Till thou canst dare to live with Me alone.”

Purified by sickness, chastened by sorrow, refined as in a refiner's fire by searching pain, death has little left to do but to bring a longed-for release to the soul ripening for the Master's presence. But with death comes the sinlessness. All we can say, all the believing martyr on a sick-bed can say, is—

“ One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er,
I am nearer home to-day
Than I have ever been before.

“ Nearer my Father's house,
Where the many mansions be ;
Nearer the great white throne,
Nearer the jasper sea.

“ Nearer the bound of life,
Where we lay our burdens down ;
Nearer leaving the cross,
Nearer wearing the crown.”

We are no more sinless on this side of the grave than we are immortal. We bear about with us a sinful nature tabernacled in a mortal frame. What were the end and meaning of all the discipline of affliction, and the pains of tribulation, with which the children of God are as a rule the more severely visited, if it be not that there is some remainder of sin to be done away? Does not the Master Himself say, "Every branch in Me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit"? When the Apostle, therefore, says to "children," "if any man sin," it is because sin to them is possible. Encouragements, or, rather, comfortable words, are as needful for believers liable to fall into sin as warnings against sin are needful for those who are not yet reconciled to God.

It is, I believe, not known for certain who indited the brief headings, those uninspired summaries of the contents of particular chapters which we find in our modern Bibles, but whoever may have been the author of them did surely comprehend the teaching of the "comfortable word," where he thus interprets for us the words of my text, "*He comforteth them against sins of infirmity.*" Sins of infirmity are distinct from sins of wilfulness, and also, I venture to think, are distinct from sins of inadvertence or of ignorance. Sins of infirmity are, such as David, after a season of depression, misgiving, faithlessness, or doubt, speaks of when he says, "I said it was mine own infirmity." Sins of infirmity, who has not experience, sad and humbling, of these? How many in the hour of their conversion felt or hoped that victory

over sin was accomplished! In the joy and fervour which accompanies conversion this is a merciful help to break with the past. It seems to us for a season as if we could never know or yield to sin again. But what is the experience of those who have seen sin in its true light, as God sees it, and have realised its guilt? Is it not in the majority of cases the experience of disappointment? The religious life seems a failure, or at best one of frequent defeat. The powers of the world are still there, and are still strong. Is not this their plaint and their fear?

“ Weary of earth and laden with my sin,
I look at heaven and long to enter in ;
But there no evil thing may find a home,
And yet I hear a voice that bids me Come.”

Christian life is full of paradoxes. We are always willing, purposing, desiring, yearning; we are always failing, and coming short of our aspirations and aims. And this is so not because of any subduing dominion of indwelling sin to which we willingly submit ourselves, but because while the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. How different we are at different times! A change in the weather elates or depresses; so little does salvation depend on *feeling*. In seasons of fear how earnest are our prayers! In the sick-room what depths of self-accusings! When trouble is hard at hand, and we are in heaviness, how we think upon God! When the heart is vexed, how we complain! So soon as the outward discipline is withdrawn, is there not a slow or rapid

decline from the more fervid and devoted state? How quickly good impressions fade, like breath fades from burnished mirror. Earnest words, how quickly they are forgotten! The mind, on the strain in the hour of devotion, soon relaxes like bent-bow. For a season faults have been held in check, and the better self comes to the front. We have recognised the will of God in a time of affliction. All this passes away as morning dew when the heat cometh. Our lighter thoughts fritter away our humiliation. Lofty and self-trusting impulses belie our acts of lowliness. We become restless, self-guiding, and wilful again. How evil thoughts, indulged without let or hindrance in the years past, return! How unholy desires, the imagination and pictures of a polluted mind, come, are borne in upon us as it were invisibly, on the wind! How a passion or temper that seemed dormant is excited and aroused, and we feel as if all the strife had to be fought over again! Are there not also the refinements of sin? Weariness in well-doing; so much of self mingled with what seems to be all for God; secondary aims lying just below the horizon of visible acts; a seeking after applause or prominence, or a reputation for piety under the thin guise of seeking our Master's glory? What shall we say of envyings, heart-burnings, petty jealousies, and a spirit of detractation? What shall we say of uncharitableness? Are not so-called religious people and religious papers often the least charitable and the most censorious? What shall we say of hankerings after the past, and that looking back which speaks of a perilous

clinging to it? What shall we say of those dark seasons of spiritual doubt, misgivings, fears, and faithlessness, on their part, who, having often had experience of the Lord's lovingkindness and have never found Him fail, when faith is tried and clouds obscure the brightness say, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious, and will He shut up His lovingkindness in displeasure?" Are not these of the sins of infirmity? Will not the experience of each one, according to his or her individual disposition and character, add to this list? Are they not a real *distress* to you? Such experience is no distress or sorrow to an impenitent man; but it is gall and worm-wood to the penitent. It is iron entering into the soul of a believer.

What is our consolation? On what shall we stay ourselves? Shall we give up all in despair? Shall we say, "It is no use trying"? Yes, it is no use *trying*. God does not say "*try*," but He does say "*believe*," and *trust*. A man says "he is trying to overcome his besetting sin." Is not this Satan trying to cast out Satan? Is a house divided against itself? Some have to learn the first lesson, viz., that we work *from* and not *for* life, that we do not work that we may be saved, but that we are saved that we may work. And some who have at last learned this lesson have to learn one yet beyond it, viz., *the difference between trying and being enabled*; between an effort and our being "kept." Believers have to realise by faith that Jesus lives to save; that He who knows our nature, Who has washed us in His atoning blood, is our Advocate, making intercession for us, pleading for

us. They have to realise that Jesus is one Whom we can call to our instant aid, as client calls his advocate ; that He stands by and strengthens us with unseen strength as our *Comforter*—for this also is the translation of the word rendered Advocate. We have One to *comfort* us. Hence this “comfortable word” for those compassed with *infirmity*. What purpose the permission of sin is accomplishing I do not now dwell upon. The love of God is perfected in our love as wild flowers may be cultivated and brought to perfection. Christ’s strength is made perfect in our weakness. Satan is being bruised every day in every sinful passion, or temper, or habit, or thought, which is being brought under the feet of our weak and imperfect nature. Our weakness is left in us that we may learn the perfection of hating what God allows and yet abhors. But ours must be the prayer of all His people, “Lord, increase our *faith*.” The faith which once brought with it *the forgiveness of sin* as its reward, and by which we were justified, is the faith we are *continually* to exercise in the same living, loving, present Saviour ; not so much for forgiveness of the past as for power and grace, and needful help in the present. Thus, as faith is increased, we exercise it more fully, and in proportion as we exercise it, it becomes stronger. In proportion as we exercise it is the blessing we receive ; always provided we are *willing* to be saved. I know few more searching questions in the Bible than this, “Wilt thou be made whole ?” “How far,” wrote one to me, “may I believe that Jesus is willing to save me ?” The answer was not far to find. “Just in so far

as you are willing that He should save you," was the reply.

And so we say to you. Search out your spirit. Sins of infirmity, are they not yours? Do they distress you? Are they a plague and a burden and a sorrow? Do you long for a purer mind, a nearer life, a more devoted spirit? When night falls, are its shadows but a parable of the shadow that darkens your spirit when you have to confess much done you could wish undone, much said you could wish unsaid, resolutions unfulfilled, purposes unaccomplished, high aims unattained, and as the baffled bird soaring aloft is beaten back to earth, do you sometimes feel as if heaven were still very, very, very far off? Bring all this in prayer at Holy Communion *to Jesus*. Your infirmities, cleaving recollections, present wants, pressing cares and fears, bring them in faith *to Him* to deal with, to make His own, the subject of His pleadings, the occasion of His all-prevailing intercession for you, the occasion also of your *trust in Him*. Thus and only thus will you be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man. Thus and only thus will sins of infirmity be converted into strength, and temptation past find you stronger to resist. And while experience must have taught you that to try in your own strength is surely to fail, and that your own strength is weakness, may taking Christ now simply at His word teach you this, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me," and yet again, "We are *made* more than conquerors through Him who loved us!"

“ Oh how the thought of God attracts
 And draws the heart from earth,
 And sickens it of passing shows
 And dissipating mirth !

“ ’Tis not enough to save our souls,
 To shun the eternal fires ;
 The thought of God will rouse the heart
 To more sublime desires.

“ God only is the creature’s home,
 Though rough and straight the road ;
 Yet nothing less can satisfy
 The love that longs for God.

“ Oh, utter but the name of God
 Down in your heart of hearts,
 And see how from the world at once
 All tempting light departs.

“ A trusting heart, a yearning eye,
 Can win their way above ;
 If mountains can be moved by faith,
 Is there less power in love ?

“ How little of that road, my soul !
 How little hast thou gone !
 Take heart and let the thought of God
 Allure thee further on.

“ The freedom from all wilful sin,
 The Christian’s daily task,—
 Oh these are graces far below
 What longing love would ask !

“ Dole not thy duties out to God,
 But let thy hand be free :
 Look long at Jesus ; His sweet blood,
 How was it dealt to thee ?

“ The perfect way is hard to flesh ;
It is not hard to love ;
If thou wert sick for want of God.
How swiftly wouldst thou move !

“ Then keep thy conscience sensitive ;
No inward token miss :
And go where grace entices thee ;—
Perfection lies in this.”

—FABER.

VII.

FREQUENCY OF COMMUNION.

“As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come.”—1 COR. xi. 26.

THUS far we have considered together, first the institution of the Sacrament, variously called Holy Communion, the Lord’s Supper, the Eucharist; and next, step by step, the conditions connected with it by which, as fulfilled or unfulfilled, we partake of that sacrament worthily or unworthily. I have taken these in their strictly evangelical order, as they are also laid down and prescribed in the Prayer Book, the language and manual of *believers*. I have dwelt on *Repentance*, *Faith*, *Thanksgiving*, and *Charity*, on *Sins of Infirmary*, and now I proceed to consider the subject of frequent and infrequent Communion, bringing this series of addresses to a close with the subject of Self-examination, that one spiritual exercise which turns religion into an impressive reality, and is especially enjoined upon as preparatory to communicating.

It will pave the way to what is before us if, by way of prelude, we remind ourselves again and yet again of what Holy Communion is the enduring memorial, and what truth it declares. It sets forth as a historic fact and reality the *death of Christ*. It is one of the monu-

ments of Christianity, having no meaning apart from Christianity. The *onus probandi* lies with the unbeliever to account for the unbroken observance of this rite, for now upwards of eighteen hundred years, on any hypothesis other than that which we find in the Gospels, and to the genuineness of which we have a separate and independent witness in the person of St. Paul. His version of its institution, in whatever way the fact was communicated to him, harmonises strictly with the narrative found in the synoptical and canonical Gospels. Within a few years, therefore, of the Ascension, about A.D. 60, we have this testimony furnished by one, other than the Evangelists, to the truth of what they record. Holy Communion has survived the flight of centuries. Amidst all the changes which eighteen hundred years and more have brought to the world, this remains unchanged. It has come down to us, to this very hour, notwithstanding the controversies of which it has been the centre, in all its primitive simplicity. Whatever of ritual or liturgy accompanies its celebration and observance, it is still but "bread and wine," which now as then are set apart and consecrated. Whatever view differing schools of thought may hold and teach of the effect of consecration, *to all outward appearance*, we retain the simple elements in their primitive simplicity. To outward sense they are bread and wine, and together with all the subtleties and refinements of the schoolmen respecting "accidents," and "substance," human thought and varied "views," true or false, have not attempted to give us any other symbols of the Body and Blood of

Christ than those which our blessed Lord Himself gave, viz., bread and wine.

The memorial refers, moreover, to no vague tradition. If all were tradition, myth or legend, historical criticism and acumen, which has proved so much of supposed ancient history to be legendary, would never have allowed this, of much more recent date, to remain unchallenged, still less to be perpetuated as unworthy of credit. It rests on the same testimony on which we commemorate any eventful circumstance or day in English history, or on which we jealously observe any ancient custom, *e.g.*, the ringing of the curfew bell; only, let us observe, that it is on testimony of greater force, in proportion as its observance of its higher antiquity. It is to us a proof in our midst, of which history cannot rid itself, that Christ, according to His most true promise and sure prediction did once come, has appeared amongst men, lived in this world as you and I are now living; and it is not only the record of His earthly life, but it is a memorial of His death. "It sets forth Jesus Christ evidently crucified amongst us." It sets forth that death on the Cross, not only as a fact, but it reminds us perpetually *why* He came, and *why* He died. He came to *save*. He came by His own death to reconcile, in Himself, God and man, and in His own body on the tree to be "our Peace." It is to us the symbol, picture, emblem, memorial of the Atonement, of that "propitiation for sin" by which as we believe in Him our sins are forgiven, and we in Him are reconciled to God.

It speaks of, declares, proclaims, two great and funda-

mental truths, viz., the fall of man, and redemption brought to fallen man by the Saviour, Jesus. It is a declaration that that death on the cross has really and fully accomplished the end for which Christ died, always provided men will avail themselves of it. It is a sustained echo of the cry, "It is finished!" Words are heaped on words to express the fulness and completeness of that one sacrifice, as against Transubstantiation, and as against those who would teach that, in Holy Communion, a sacrifice is offered up. If a sacrifice is offered as often as we celebrate Holy Communion, is not this to declare that the death of Christ was *not* all-sufficient and complete, that it was *not* a *finished* work? And when the apostle says, "As often as ye do eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come," he would have us to understand that so often as we communicate we acknowledge that we are sinners, who can be saved by Christ alone; we bear witness to the world that there is, in this our day of grace and opportunity, salvation, pardon for sinners, full and free in Christ Jesus. We come to the Holy Table not to give, but to receive; not to be *made* His disciples, but *as* His disciples, seeking from Him, in His appointed ordinances, all the pardon, peace, and exalting strength we so greatly need. Can we do this too often?

Holy Communion, moreover, is the pledge of His second coming. It points backward and it points forward. The Passover travelled down uninterrupted in its observance from the day of its institution to this very hour, for the Jews, with blinded eyes, still have but the

shadow. The Passover reminded the Jew of deliverance from Egyptian bondage. It pointed forward through the mist of years to a deliverance from a bondage greater than Egyptian. Men and women of that generation were led year by year, feast by feast, to look forward to that *first* coming. They lived, they died in sure expectation of it. At last Christ, the true Messiah, came ! Shadow gave place to substance ; type to antitype ; figure to reality. He changed this memorial, which looks back to His death and forward to His second coming. It is in our very midst, as the Passover was to the Jew. Like the pillar of cloud by day, and pillar of fire by night, it has its two aspects. It gives light by day and night. Two feelings belong to Holy Communion, abasement and triumph. Abasement, because everything that reminds us of Christ's *death* reminds us of past guilt ; and triumph, because it reminds us of His coming again, without sin, unto salvation. He is as sure to come again as once He came ; not in humility, but in glory ; not to save, but to judge ; not to *make*, but to *find* us acceptable ; not to teach, but to discriminate ; not to minister, but to *own* ; not to persuade, but to separate. Events are rapidly hastening on to that great crisis, to the consummation of all things ; to the winding up of the world's story of man's fall and man's redemption, of Paradise lost and Paradise regained. The fig-tree is putting forth its leaves, and we learn, by prophecies fulfilled before our eyes, that the summer day of His kingdom draweth nigh. Year by year is our salvation nearer than when we believed ; and whether we inter-

pret the admonition of the Lord's Second coming as of our own end, or of His immediate advent, it is true that "the Lord is at hand."

And all the past has been preparatory to that stupendous event. The world was looking for the Messiah and making ready for His coming, and faithful souls went down to their rest, "seeing Him afar off." The Passover had been prepared in the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Since Christ's Ascension, in this dispensation of the Spirit, the world is being prepared for His second coming by the life and immortality brought to light by the Gospel ; by the preaching of the Cross ; by voices crying in the wilderness ; by the proclamation of the King's message ; by the reiteration of the glad tidings of a salvation finished and offered to all, full and free for their present acceptance, and by making known to man, as the Spirit applies the message, that all is done for them ; that there will be no second Calvary, no Cross raised in Heaven or in Hell, no opportunities other than those which now are ours. Our message is that the mercy of God was exhibited in its culminating act in that hour when Jesus bowed His head in agony for us, and amidst sympathising nature gave up the ghost. We teach that death when it comes sets the seal to our eternal state, and that whether we be eternally saved or lost is decided in the grave. We who have an open Bible, we who are within Church walls, cannot plead ignorance of the way of salvation. We cannot doubt or gainsay the glad testimony of believers who testify to their joy and peace in believing. We cannot

say that thousands have not found a present peace ; as little can we account for those means of grace which are divinely ordained, unless they have some ultimate end in view, and if these are not intended for the soul, we ask, What end do they serve ?

Of all these " means of grace," taken as a whole, which one of them, where faithfully used, constitutes more true preparation for Christ's coming ? When He shall come it will be not to save but to own the saved. Salvation is *present*. Forgiveness of sin is ours so soon as we believe in Jesus. The way of the forgiven is not to the Cross, but it is from the Cross. At the Cross we unburden our sins, we go from the Cross forgiven to walk with God. But though forgiven we are not angels who know no sin. There is no man that sinneth not. The best, the holiest have need to have their feet washed ; they need frequent cleansing from the soils and stains they cannot but contract in this sinful world ; and their sense of need of grace is in proportion to the sense of their sinfulness. Having once taken Jesus at His word and experienced His grace, that experience leads them again to seek and again to find help in Him who has already been a present help in time of trouble ; the more they find Him true, the more they adore Him for His truth ; and the more they know of His redeeming love, the more is the love of God shed abroad in their hearts. We have to grow in grace. We are to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Repentance is to be deepened. It is through deeper conviction of sin that we become holy. Faith is to increase by exercise as the arm is strength-

ened by exercise ; as the sailor, finding that the tide lifts his stranded vessel, trusts the tide again. Joy, finding expression in thanksgiving, is to increase as we learn more and more how God has loved such sinners as we, and as fruit ripens for the harvest, as we grow more loving we grow more Christlike, more meet for that state where tears for sin are never shed ; where faith gives place to sight, and the fruition of joy ; where only praise is heard, and no prayer uttered, for all is theirs who are in Christ ; where love reigns supreme ; where is no jarring note, no discord, no strife of tongues, but endless, perfect peace ! Now what is there in all this, and in which lies the soul's true preparation for Heaven, —for we can conceive none other more in harmony with the place where God dwells—what is there in all this which is not required of us as often as we communicate, and that is not exercised or experienced as often as we fulfil the conditions of worthy Communion ? We are bidden to make humble confession of our sins, meekly kneeling upon our knees. We are exhorted to approach with lively faith. We are earnestly warned to examine ourselves that we be in perfect charity with all men. We have in it the occasion of thanksgiving and praise. We have renewed opportunity for offering the devotion of our life and the dedication of ourselves as “ a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice,” humbly praying of God that we may be fulfilled with His grace and heavenly benediction. Now set before yourselves one *habitually* receiving Holy Communion, not regarding it as a *charm*, not coming to it as a *duty* to be coldly performed, or

through the impulse of religious sentiment, not taking an exaggerated view of this holy ordinance, and making frequent Communion the sum total of their religion, but one *really penitent*, really forsaking sins they once loved ; believing, not intellectually, but savingly ; taught of the Holy Ghost that coming to Holy Communion does not *save* or *awaken*, but that it nourishes and edifies ; praising God for grace experienced, and praising Him by the consistent life ; shedding around in his or her daily intercourse with the world in all its relationships the charm, the grace, the fragrance, the power of a gentle life, is not this preparation for Christ's coming ? If not, what then is, or what other are you making ? Does not Holy Communion pre-eminently and particularly afford opportunity for those spiritual exercises which, as they remind us of our need, keep us near the unfailing springs of strength, so that as we avail ourselves of appointed ordinances in the land of our pilgrimage, we find our Elims and Bacas in the desert ? So the early Christians regarded Holy Communion, fresh themselves from the scenes and memories of Calvary. They communicated *daily*. Once a week was their least frequent celebration. By degrees, as the freshness wore off, and the death of Christ was less vividly realised, the Church thought well to prescribe stated times, and made the three great festivals, corresponding to the three great Jewish feasts, the almost compulsory occasions of communicating. At the Reformation, our Church took all the care she could to reconcile her members to frequent Communion, and her rule is, that it should be celebrated every Sun

day in every parish church, thus giving a weekly returning opportunity of declaring Christ's death till He come. No rule, consistently with the liberty of the Gospel, can, I venture to think, be arbitrarily laid down. So soon as religion, or any one of its exercises, becomes a matter of rule, it is in danger of becoming stiff and formal, of parting with life. Nor, again, if the view I have been setting before you be true and scriptural, should frequent or infrequent Communion be a watchword or party sign. It has really nothing whatever to do with those differences in Church views which will be undiscernible and unknown hereafter. The question before the white throne will not be, "Were you, in life, a High or Low Churchman?" it will be, "Are you Christ's?" The frequent communicant, who is most particular in this respect, is not unfrequently the most uncharitable, and even inconsistent of men, and they who, with due preparation, communicate infrequently, very often set a high example of holiness to the more frequent communicant. My own conviction is, that while large liberty must be granted, Holy Communion will be valued and partaken of in proportion as we grow in grace. The more earnestly we desire to be like Christ, the more shall we seek Him in His appointed ordinances; and while it may be that once a month should be our least frequent communion, they are more likely to be blessed and strengthened, who, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, communicate more frequently, and are not sent empty away. This much, at least, we may safely say, that in infrequent Communion there is less of that

self-examination which, if spread over large intervals of time, must leave much unexamined, and if we can once bring ourselves to believe that we can either dispense with means of grace, or be entirely guided by our own inclinations, the subtle enemy of our souls will take advantage of this, to make us gradually decline yet further from God, and to make the retracing of our steps difficult, if not impossible.

And if Holy Communion be a preparation for Christ's coming, what must be said to, or of those who never communicate, with whom it is no question of frequency or infrequency? What is your preparation and preparedness without it? What takes its place with you? What are you substituting for it? It is either a means of grace, or it is not. If it be a means of grace, who has told and persuaded *you* that you can do without that which all faithful souls have devoutly used to their comfort and strength? Do you believe that Christ will come again as surely as to-morrow's sun will rise? What preparation are you making to meet your God? Your time and mine may be much nearer than we think, for the summons may come to-morrow, it might even come to-day! What if that summons overtake you unforgiven, because impenitent; unsaved, because unbelieving? What, if frequent in the house of God, Christ at the last will nevertheless not own you? What, if He should say, "I know you not, because you knew Me not. You did not declare My death; you did not remember Me; you did not prepare yourself for My presence; you did not love, did not serve, did not wait for Me!" Are these

things true or false? If false, why are we here? If true, is not neglect of Holy Communion to treat them as if false? Are we only to speak words of *comfort* in the ears of dying men? Is there no place or need for words of *warning*?

Earnest, humble, contrite believing souls, such as need no provocation, but who gladly and lovingly come to Holy Communion, oh! see in it, and so continue to use it as a preparation for seeing Him one day as He is! Dear as this memorial is to Christian hearts, it is but the substitute for something dearer far; even the personal presence of our Saviour and our God. He manifests Himself to faithful souls, and "makes Himself known in the breaking of bread." In no enthusiastic or unreal, but in a sober and real sense, He makes Himself known as He made Himself known to His disciples; pardoning the sins you confess, freely forgiving, freely receiving. "Tell me," I said to a dying girl, so wasted with lingering and wearing sickness, that there was little left for death to do than to loose the silver cord and free the waiting spirit, "tell me the secret of your patience throughout this long sickness, that no word of murmur has passed your lips, that you have no fear." "I will tell you," she replied. "I once heard you say that you believed in the present forgiveness of sin—so *present*, that the sick, sin-burdened soul coming to Jesus in His appointed ordinances, grasping His promises, would find Him a present Saviour. You bid us take Him at His word. He says, 'Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you

rest.' I took Him one day at His word. I came to Holy Communion. I said, Lord, I am weary ; I am heavy laden, give *me* rest ! There came the answer as with a voice from Heaven. I heard Him say to me, ' Daughter, go thy way, thy sins are forgiven thee.' That," she said, " is the secret of my peace." She, to my knowledge, left those Communion rails for the sick-bed from which she never rose, save to be borne to her last resting-place. But " Daughter, go thy way, thy sins are forgiven thee," were words of latest consolation ; they were the last she was heard to utter as her saintly spirit passed into her Saviour's presence !

'TILL He come !" Oh, let the words
Linger on the trembling chords ;
Let the " little while " between
In their golden light be seen,
Let us think how heaven and home
Lie beyond that—" till He come."

When the weary ones we love
Enter on their rest above,
Seems the earth so poor and vast,
All our life-joy overcast ?
Hush ! be every murmur dumb,
It is only " till He come."

Clouds and conflicts round us press,
Would we have one sorrow less ?
All the sharpness of the cross ;
All that tells the world is loss,
Death, and darkness, and the tomb,
Only whisper—" till He come."

See ! the feast of love is spread,
Drink the wine and break the bread,
Sweet memorials ! till the Lord
Calls us round His heavenly board,
Some from earth, from glory some
Severed only "till He come."

VIII.

SELF-EXAMINATION.

“Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.”—1 COR. xi. 27–33.

THUS far we have considered the institution of the Lord’s Supper, and the place it holds in the Christian covenant. We have dwelt on the circumstances and end of its institution, and on those conditions connected with it, which, as they are fulfilled on our part, make that Sacrament a means of grace. In the address immediately preceding, I endeavoured to show that where these spiritual exercises, in which so much is implied, are habitually exercised, we can conceive no more fitting preparation for the Second Coming of our Lord, which, whether we interpret it of His personal Advent, or of our own end, will be the crisis in the soul’s history. For whether we be of the quick or dead at His coming, His Advent will not convert sinners into

saints, nor saints into sinners; it will not *make*, but will *find* us an acceptable people. Christ came once, as the Passover foreshadowed, and He came then to save. He will come again as surely as He once came. And of this Holy Communion is the earnest and pledge. When this symbol shall give place to that which it symbolises, when the shadow shall disappear, it will be to claim His own as already redeemed; it will be to disown the already lost and unsaved. If this be true, how inestimable the value of all means by which we are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time," especially the value of Holy Communion so neglected, so little realised! Nothing in connection with our religious life, and with its exercises, is more surprising and to be lamented, than the comparatively few communicants in any given congregation, except, perhaps, in churches where an exaggerated view of the Sacrament is entertained and encouraged. Great stress may be laid on frequent celebrations and frequent communicating, and, together with this, there may be but little personal realisation of the guilt of sin, and of that "love of Christ" which constrains. It is not uncommon to find the most worldly persons the most frequent communicants, and churches, in which frequent celebrations constitute a marked feature, thronged by the leaders of fashion, and by those whose daily life, as not dedicate and consecrate to God, occasions a serious stumbling-block to those who do not communicate. But if it be so, that some loving sin more than the Saviour, and the world more

than God, do well not to make their case, if possible, worse by profaning this ordinance, there are others who do not, while they might communicate from *mistaken views*, rather than from *cherished sin*. No one word in the Bible has probably caused more fear and distress to many, who but for it would communicate, than the word "*unworthily*." Ask a man, "Why do I never see you at the Lord's Table? Your wife, your child communicates; why do not you? It is not as if you were an unbeliever or scoffer. Your presence at God's House is, at the least, an outward assurance of some degree of belief. Did it never occur to you that there is one ordinance which *you* never partake of? Is it that you consider yourself competent to judge of your soul's needs, and that *you* need not to remember Christ whatever others may do? Is it that you do not like to be detained longer in Church? What is it? It is impossible but that *some* reason must be yours sufficient to influence you." Speak or reason thus with a man, and if it be not discovered to you that there is some gross sin indulged, which makes communicating impossible, he will probably say, "I am not worthy. I shall only expose myself to condemnation. You have these words solemnly warning me off, 'eateth and drinketh damnation.' You warn communicants lest they 'kindle God's wrath against themselves.' You go on to say, 'We provoke him to plague us with divers diseases and sundry kinds of death.' Who would knowingly and willingly risk all this? Who, if this be true, would not say, sinful as I am, why should I commit more sin, and if

already liable to the wrath of God, why should I, of my own accord, render myself liable to a yet weightier judgment, and to a more awful condemnation?" In the mouth of a wilful, confirmed, impenitent sinner such a plea were not without reason. It were not unnatural or inconsistent on the part of one whose religion was just skin-deep; who, holding "his views," sits very loosely to the faith of Christendom, flirts with unbelief, parleys with scepticism, looks on seriousness as enthusiasm, and because the majority of mankind are agreed to worship God in particular forms, contributes the quota of his patronising presence, making a convenience of God, or a God of his religion, but has never once realised his own personal lost state out of Christ, and having no hatred of sin, no longing after a state of reconciliation with God, and of that walk with God which cannot be until we are reconciled, could not well be looked for at the Lord's Table. One can understand such as these not daring to communicate. Over such surely angels weep tears of sorrow! God forbid there be many such within church walls! They are adding to their condemnation by being within God's House if they do not repent, quite as much as if they frequented the Lord's Table. For the ministry is "a savour of life unto life or of death unto death." Men are softened or hardened by the preaching of the Word. Fire melts wax and hardens clay, and this had never been found in God's Word, if it be not true of what goes on, and is transacted within church walls, "if judgment begin at the House of God."

But there are who deeming themselves unfit, are the very persons who should come to Holy Communion, and not absent themselves. Observe, for it is of moment, the Apostle does not say "*unworthy*," he says "*unworthily*." The word used is an adverb, it is not an adjective. It has strict reference not so much to personal qualifications, to personal fitness or unfitness to partake of Holy Communion, as to partaking of it in a manner unsuitable to the purposes for which the Lord's Supper was primarily designed and instituted. This is its first and obvious meaning. The warning is against the careless and profane, it is not against the fearful, timid, and doubting Christian. To make this more plain, we will very briefly refer to the circumstances with which this warning is more immediately associated.

This particular chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians is written with a view to correct certain irregularities which had crept into the Church of Christ. The Corinthians were very recent converts from paganism. The Church was in its infancy, and these converts from paganism were tender "babes in Christ." We do not readily part with the traditions, teaching, and prejudices of child-life. We naturally expect to find crude, and even pagan notions lingering, like twilight rays, in the minds of these converts. It is not impossible, as some are of opinion, that they looked upon the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in much the same light as the heathen looked on their rites. They may have thought they were doing honour to the

Saviour on the same principle as feasts were observed in honour of idols, and thus the only difference between the heathen's feast and the Christian's Sacrament was that Jesus, and not an idol, was the object of worship. This may explain St. Paul's words in his Epistle to the Galatians, "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils (or rather '*demons*'), and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table and of the table of demons." In these words St. Paul would seem to confirm the view already mentioned. Others, again, think that, as it was the primitive custom to celebrate the Lord's Supper in private houses daily, and as this was then as it is with the Jews now, of the nature of a meal, each bringing his quota of food, these "love feasts"—*agapæ*, as they came to be called—degenerated into occasions of intemperance, festivity, and revelry. They were even called *ἱκανοί*, club feasts, and were associated with plans of mutual relief or of charity towards the poor. These feasts became scenes of riot and disorder. At first the idea of rich and poor meeting together, bringing their own provisions, and commemorating Christ's death, was beautiful in idea, but it was open to abuse, because, as a rule, it is never good to mix things religious with things worldly. These *love feasts* became the occasion of evil, and of scandal—"one is hungry and another is drunken." Therefore the Apostle recalls to their remembrance the reason for the in-

stitution of the Lord's Supper, and from this deduces the guilt and responsibility of a desecration of that holy ordinance. To partake of it "unworthily" is to come forgetting the purport and aim of the ordinance. To approach it without a realisation of a Saviour's love, without a warm, living faith in the Atonement and its efficacy, in a selfish and unloving spirit, this is very different from coming with a deep sense of sin, and, therefore, with a deep conviction of the need of a Saviour. It is true that we are in ourselves unworthy of any approach to God, or of God to us. When we think of heaven, and remember that a church on earth is to us a type of heaven, we might say we are unworthy to come here into the Presence of God. When we think of His holiness, we might say we are unworthy to come into His presence in prayer or in any other devout exercise. The plea might be urged with quite as much force and reason with reference to any act of worship as to that of partaking of Holy Communion. But this is different from worshipping unworthily, from partaking "unworthily," i.e., from an utter misconception of the end and object of Holy Communion, or in a frame of mind at variance with the conditions which make it a means of grace. They who thus abused it became, ἑσχατοί, liable, exposed to punishment; they were guilty of profaning the sacred symbols, and, consequently, liable to punishment. Our translation of the word κρίμα is unfortunate. The better rendering is "*judgment*," not "*damnation*." That which should be the means of appropriating the benefits of Christ's death becomes the occasion of ex-

posing ourselves to the displeasure of God. They who thus profane the ordinance do not *discern*, or rather *discriminate*, between an ordinary meal and the Lord's body ; between the sacrifice to idols and the simple commemoration of a Saviour's love. For this reason many were "weak and sickly." St. Paul in this expression probably refers to some extraordinary, peculiar characteristic and wide-spread sickness as the punishment divinely inflicted for a desecration of the Lord's Supper. Such visitation is evidently still regarded as possible. In our exhortation to Holy Communion we have these solemn words, "We kindle God's wrath against us ; we provoke Him to plague us with divers diseases and sundry kinds of death." For all we know, desecration of the Sacrament may be the secret of some bodily ailment, the real cause or occasion of which we never suspect. God has many methods by which to chastise. Do we not, on the other hand, in administering the sacred elements say, "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, *preserve thy body* and soul unto everlasting life?" And even if we do not adopt any view such as would seem to teach that in some material sense a right reception of the Communion be of the nature of an antiseptic, a work of life counteracting a work of death, a spiritual medicine as an antidote to physical disease, yet, have we not spiritual invalids, sick and weakly Christians, some who "sleep" ? A spiritual blight is resting on them. Is there not the loss of the favour of God, the hiding of His countenance, the withholding of His blessing, the

denial of the grace conveyed in a worthy partaking, a deterioration of the spiritual life, and a declension from holiness, like a plant which, blighted, dwarfed, and stunted, dies down to the very roots with a slow and subtle and sure decay?

And is this possible? Surely yes! There is a possible deterioration of the spiritual as there is decay and deterioration of the physical life. The abuse of means of grace is as full of peril as the believing use of means of grace is fraught with blessing. Hence the value of the Apostle's counsel. *Δοκιμαζέτω!* "Let a man examine himself." Let him put himself to the proof. Let him try himself, not superficially, but searchingly and thoroughly. The word itself is significant. It is used to express the refining of a refiner's fire. Nothing escapes the searching ordeal of the crucible. The work done in a crucible is not superficial but thorough. The heat finds out all impurity and alloy. So "let a man examine himself." Let it be a strictly personal work, independent of the ministry; independent even of books. Let it be an investigation held by the man on himself, he being judge and jury in one, passing his own verdict and sentence. Let him not ask of others, "Am I fit?" Let him ask himself, "Am I fit?" Let him not make his conscience over to another, as we make our health a physician's care, and thus become spiritual invalids, but let us judge ourselves as we each one ought to be able, seeing we have an open Bible, and formularies which are framed on the Bible, and conscience, and tests within

the sphere of our own consciousness, by which we may judge ourselves. For nothing so turns religion into something real and strictly personal as self-examination does. It brings it home to the heart. It is very distinct from passing, evanescent good impressions. It is that putting questions to ourselves about ourselves which, when honestly and sincerely done, gives us that which so few have, and yet all ought to have, which many fear to possess, and which, when possessed, is the life of prayer, *self-knowledge*.

“Man, know thyself! all wisdom centres there.”

What is more remarkable than a soul afraid of itself, of knowing itself, of seeing and scrutinising itself? How much more effectual would the great ordinance of preaching be if, after some earnest and searching sermon, instead of hurrying out of God's House, we paused for a space, and, reverently kneeling down, searched out our hearts, and spoke to ourselves, and said to ourselves, “What if all I have been hearing is true, not of my neighbour, but of *myself*? Wherein did conscience reprove *me*? What message was there from God to *me*? Was there no call to *me* to repent? Did *I* hear no voice to which it were peril to turn a deaf ear again, and yet again?” Or, “What may I apply of encouragement to persevere, or of peace to comfort my troubled heart?” What reality it would give to prayer, if instead of a few Paternosters mumbled over and over again, or the half-hearted petitions stolen out of books, or a feeble tribute of devotion, more like the

morning and evening habit of dressing and undressing, we, as François de Sales recommends, "placed ourselves first solemnly in the presence of God," and then sought the guidance and suggesting influence of the Holy Ghost, and in the clear, penetrating, searching light of the Spirit, "prayed in the Holy Ghost." He maketh *intercession* for the saints according to the will of God. He intercedes, not in the sense of the Saviour's intercession—the Greek word is quite another—He "addresses Himself to us," suggesting and inspiring subject-matter for prayer, by discovering to us real wants, so that the confession of sin is real, and the attitude before God that of a contrite and humble spirit. We shall thus approach Holy Communion, prepared for the worthy participation, not by a searching of our hearts which will *make* us worthy, for self-examination is not grace, but by a searching which will help us to determine whether or no we be qualified to come. And to this end suffer me to give you one or more plain rules.

First, pray that the Holy Ghost, Who guides into all truth, will so guide you in all your inquiries, and in your judging yourself, that you may put no needless but only necessary questions, and that you may be as much protected against the wiles of the devil, who might keep the weak in faith from communicating, as he might, but for the Spirit's guidance, embolden one impenitent to communicate.

Next, many manuals are put forth as helps to devotion, and few discourses are written on self-examination

without suggesting topics or heads for self-examination. We may, however, reduce our self-examination to the crucial tests which our Prayer-book has already been shown to supply. We may safely test ourselves by these, taking for our standard the Ten Commandments of the Old and the added commandment of the New Testament. I can conceive nothing more comprehensive, searching, and capable of detailed application. Do I truly repent?—i.e., have I ever seen sin as God sees it? That is a plain question. Have I ever realised that I deserve nothing but hell? That is a plain question. Have I had such an insight into the guilt and plague of sin that I now see that to continue in it is death eternal, and am I earnestly resolving, God helping me, to forsake my besetting or other sin? Again. Do I believe in Jesus? That is a plain question. Is my faith more than a cold, uninfluential assent to received Christian doctrine? Is it a faith which springs out of my conviction that I am a great sinner, standing in need of a great Saviour? Has Jesus been revealed *to me* and *in me*, and am I trusting for salvation not to any merit of my own, or to anything I can do, but *to what has been done for me*, and to what God mercifully promises to every soul who believes? This is not a question of weak faith or of strong faith. It is a question of faith. A grain of gold is gold. Then, does this faith constrain through the love that has been awakened by it? Does it lead on to the dedication and consecration of myself, body, soul, and spirit, to the Lord, and however short I may fall of it, compassed

with infirmity, am I sincerely desirous to live a holier life? Am I looking continually for grace in which not so much to *try*, as by which, my will concurring with God's will, I may be *enabled* to walk with Him? This admits of detailed investigation touching our outward conversation, and the tenor of our daily conduct. And am I in charity with all men; striving to live peaceably; forbearing with the faults and infirmities of others; forgiving as I hope to be forgiven; forgetting as God forgets? All this, and much more, is to take account of our standing in the sight of God. This is to judge ourselves. This, when sincerely done, with a view to forgiveness and grace, is to avert judgment to come. It is to anticipate the great white throne. It is to secure a present pardon. It is to be shut in in the ark. It is to shelter ourselves in a present Saviour's love, so that when He shall come to judge the world we shall not be condemned with the impenitent and unbelieving. Where one, however imperfect his repentance or weak his faith, can truthfully, after self-examination, say that all this is the desire of the heart, such approach the Lord's Table, not to their judgment, but to their great and promised comfort. The soul of such is strengthened and refreshed by the Body and Blood of Christ as our bodies are by bread and wine. So far from the spiritual life deteriorating, we receive out of Christ's fulness; so far from being "weak and sickly," we become vigorous and fruitful unto every good word and work. This habitual self-examination brings with it its present blessing of pardon and peace,

it is the soul's discipline, and the soul's preparation for seeing Christ as He is, and having boldness in the day of judgment.

And so, in view of passing years, and an eternity ever drawing nearer ; in view of that awful hour when our eternal destiny shall be sealed, all means of grace exhausted, and all opportunities of salvation passed, what better prayer can we take into our lips than this—

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts : and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

THE AGONY.

O SOUL of Jesus, sick to death !
Thy blood and prayer together plead ;
My sins have bowed Thee to the ground,
As the storm bows the feeble reed.

Midnight—and still the oppressive load
Upon Thy tortured heart doth lie ;
Still the abhorred procession winds
Before Thy spirit's quailing eye.

Deep waters have come in, O Lord !
All darkly on Thy human soul ;
And clouds of supernatural gloom
Around Thee are allowed to roll.

The weight of the eternal wrath
Drives over Thee with precious dread ;
And, forced upon the olive roots,
In deathlike sadness droops Thy head,

Thy spirit weighs the sins of men ;
 Thy science fathoms all their guilt ;
 Thou sickenest heavily at Thy heart,
 And the pores open,—blood is spilt.

And Thou hast struggled with it, Lord !
 Even to the limit of Thy strength,
 While hours, whose minutes were as years,
 Slowly fulfilled their weary length.

And Thou hast shuddered at each act,
 And shrunk with an astonished fear,
 As if Thou couldst not bear to see
 The loathsomeness of sin so near.

Sin and the Father's anger ! they
 Have made Thy lower nature faint ;
 All save the love within Thy heart,
 Seemed for the moment to be spent.

My God ! my God ! and can it be
 That I should sin so lightly now,
 And think no more of evil thoughts,
 Than of the wind that waves the bough ?

I sin,—and heaven and earth go round,
 As if no dreadful deed were done,
 As if Christ's blood had never flowed
 To hinder sin, or to atone.

I walk the earth with lightsome step,
 Smile at the sunshine, breathe the air,
 Do my own will, nor ever heed
 Gethsemane and Thy long prayer.

Shall it be always thus, O Lord?
Wilt Thou not work this hour in me
The grace Thy passion merited,
Hatred of self and love of Thee?

Ever when tempted, make me see,
Beneath the olive's moon-pierced shade,
My God, alone, outstretched, and bruised,
And bleeding, on the earth He made.

And make me feel it was my sin,
As though no other sins there were,
That was to Him who bears the world
A load that He could scarcely bear!

FABER.

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